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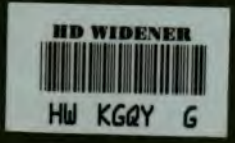
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MULTITUDE AND SOLITUDE

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN MARGARET"

"Nor shall these souls be free from pains and fears,
Till women waft them over in their tears."

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
1911

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TO

MY WIFE

I

What play do they play? Some confounded play or other.
Let's send for some cards. I ne'er saw a play had anything in't.
A True Widow.

ROGER NALDRETT, the writer, sat in his box with a friend, watching the second act of his tragedy. The first act had been received coldly; the cast was nervous, and the house, critical as a first-night audience always is, had begun to fidget. He watched his failure without much emotion. He had lived through his excitement in the days before the production; but the moment interested him, it was so unreal. The play was not like the play which he had watched so often in rehearsal. Unless some speech jarred upon him, as failing to help the action, he found that he could not judge of it in detail. In the manuscript, and in the rehearsals, he had tested it only in detail. Now he saw it as a whole, as something new, as a rough and strong idea, of which he could make nothing. Shut up there in the box, away from the emotions of the house, he felt himself removed from time, the only person in the theatre under no compulsion to attend. He sat far back in the box, so that his friend, John O'Neill, might have a better view of the stage. He was conscious of the blackness of John's head against the stage lights, and of a gleam of gilt on the opposite boxes. Sometimes when, at irregular intervals, he saw some of the cast, on the far left

of the stage, he felt disgust at the crudity of the grease paint smeared on their faces.

Sometimes an actor hesitated for his lines, forgot a few words, or improvised others. He drew in his breath sharply, whenever this happened, it was like a false note in music; but he knew that he was the only person there who felt the discord. He found himself admiring the address of these actors; they had nerve; they carried on the play, though their memories were a whirl of old tags all jumbled together. It was when there was a pause in the action, through delay at an entrance, that the harrow drove over his soul; for in the silence, at the end of it, when those who wanted to cough had coughed, there sometimes came a single half-hearted clap, more damning than a hiss. At those times he longed to be on the stage crying out to the actors how much he admired them. He was shut up in his box, under cover, but they were facing the music. They were playing to a cold wall of shirt-fronts, not yet hostile, but puzzled by the new mind, and vexed by it. They might rouse pointed indifference in the shirt-fronts, they might rouse fury, they would certainly win no praise. Roger felt pity for them. He wished that the end would come swiftly, that he might be decently damned and allowed to go.

Towards the middle of the act the leading lady made a pitiful brave effort to save the play. She played with her whole strength, in a way which made his spirit rise up to bless her. Her effort kept the house for a moment. That dim array of heads and shirt-fronts became polite, attentive; a little

glimmer of a thrill began to pass from the stalls over the house, as the communicable magic grew stronger. Then the second lady, who, as Roger knew, had been feverish at the dress rehearsal, struggled for a moment with a sore throat which made the performance torture to her. Roger heard her voice break, knowing very well what it meant. He longed to cry out to comfort her; though the only words which came to his heart were: "You poor little devil." Then a man in the gallery shouted to her to "Speak up, please." Half a dozen others took up the cry. They wreaked on the poor woman's misfortune all the venom which they felt against the play. Craning far forward, the author saw the second lady bite her lip with chagrin; but she spoke up like a heroine. After that the spell lost hold. The act dragged on, people coughed and fidgeted; the play seemed to grow in absurd unreality, till Roger wondered why there was no hissing. The actors, who had been hitherto too slow, began to hurry. They rushed through an instant of dramatic interest, which, with a good audience, would have gone solemnly. The climax came with a rush, the act ended, the last speech was spoken. Then, for five, ten, fifteen, twenty fearful seconds the curtain hesitated. The absurd actors stood absurdly waiting for the heavy red cloth to cloak them from the house. Something had jammed, or the flyman had missed his cue. When the curtain fell half the house was sniggering. The half-dozen derisive claps which followed were intended for the flyman.

The author's box happened to be the royal box,

with a sitting-room beyond it, furnished principally with chairs and ash-trays. When the lights brightened, Roger walked swiftly into the sitting-room and lighted a cigarette. John O'Neill came stumbling after him.

"It's very good. It's very good," he said with vehemence. "It's all I thought it when you read it. The audience don't know what to make of it. They're puzzled by the new mind. It's the finest thing that's been done here since poor Wentworth's thing." He paused for a second, then looked at Roger with a hard, shrewd, medical look. "I don't quite like the look of your leading lady. She's going to break down."

"They'll never stand the third act," said Roger. "There'll be a row in the third act."

At this moment the door opened. Falempin, the manager of the theatre, a gross and cheerful gentleman, with the relics of a boisterous vinous beauty in his face, entered with a mock bow.

"Naldrett," he said, with a strong French accent, "you are all right. Your play is very fine. Very interesting. I go to lose four thousan' poun' over your play. Eh? Very good. What so? Som' day I go to make forty thousan' poun' out of your play. Eh? It is all in a day's work. The peegs" (he meant his patrons, the audience) "will not stan' your third act. It is too—it is too——" He shook his head over the third act. "Miss Hanlon, pretty little Miss Hanlon, she go into hysterics."

"Could I go round to speak to her?" Roger asked.

"No good," said Falempin. "She cannot see anyone. She will not interrupt her illusion."

"What happened to the curtain?" O'Neill asked.

"Ah, the curtain. It was absurd. I go to see about the curtain. We meet at Philippi. Eh? There will be a row. But you are all right, Naldrett. You know John O'Neill. Eh? Mr. O'Neill he tell you you are all right." He bowed with a flourish of gloved hands, and vanished through the stage door.

"John," said Roger, "the play's killed. I don't mind about the play; but I want to know what it is that they hate."

"They hate the new mind," said Roger. "They've been accustomed to folly, persiflage, that abortion the masculine hero, and justifications of their vices. They like caricatures of themselves. They like photographs. They like illuminated texts. They decorate their minds just as they do their homes. You come to them out of the desert, all locusts and wild honey, crying out about beauty. These people won't stand it. They are the people in Frith's Derby Day. Worse. They think they aren't."

"I'm sorry about Falempin," said Roger. "He's a good fellow. I shall lose him a lot of money."

"Falempin's a Frenchman. He would rather produce a work of art than pass his days, as he calls it, selling 'wash for the peegs.' What is four thousand to a theatre manager? A quarter's rent. And what is a quarter's rent to anybody?"

"Well," said Roger, "it's a good deal to me. "Let's go round the house and hear what they say."

They thrust their cigarettes into ash-trays, and passed through the stalls to the foyer. The foyer

of the King's was large. The decorations of mirrors, gilt, marble, and red velvet, gave it that look of the hotel which art's temples seldom lack in this country. It is a concession to the taste of the patrons; you see it in theatres and in picture galleries, wherever vulgarity has her looking-glasses. There were many people gathered there. Half a dozen minor critics stood together comparing notes, deciding, as outsiders think, what it would be safe to say. Roger noticed among them a short, burly shaggy-haired man, who wore a turned-down collar. He did not know the man; but he knew at once, from his appearance, that he was a critic, and a person of no distinction. He was about to look elsewhere, when he saw, with a flush of anger, that the little burly man had paused in his speech, with his cigarette dropped from his mouth, to watch them narrowly, in the covert manner of the ill-bred and malignant. Roger saw him give a faint nudge with his elbow to the man nearest to him. The man turned to look; three of the others turned to look; the little man's lips moved in a muttered explanation. The group stared. Roger, who resented their impertinence, stared back so pointedly that their eyes fell. O'Neill's hands twitched. Roger became conscious that this was one of O'Neill's feuds. They walked together past the group, with indifferent faces. As they passed, the little man, still staring, remarked, "One of that school." They heard his feet move round so that he might stare after them. O'Neill turned to Roger.

"Do you know who that is?"

"No."

"That's O'Donnell, of *The Box Office*. He's the man who did for poor Wentworth's thing. I called him out in Paris. He wouldn't come."

"Really, John?"

"Oh, you're too young; you don't remember. He wrote everywhere. He wrote a vile tract called *Drama and Decency*. He nearly got Wentworth prosecuted."

"I've heard of that! So O'Donnell wrote that?"

"He did."

"Who are the others?"

"Obscure dailies and illustrateds."

A little grey man, with nervous eyes, came up to Roger, claiming acquaintance on the strength of one previous meeting. He began to talk to Roger with the easy patronage of one who, though impotent in art himself, and without a divine idea in him, has the taste of his society, its gossip, its critical cant, and an acquaintance with some of its minor bards.

"You mustn't be discouraged," he said, with implied intellectual superiority; "I hear you have quite a little following. How do you like the acting? I don't like Miss Hanlon's acting myself. Did you choose her?" As he spoke his eyes wandered over O'Neill, who stood apart, with his back half turned to them. It was evident that he knew O'Neill by sight, and wished to be introduced to him. Roger remembered how this man had called O'Neill a charlatan. An insult rose to his lips. Who was this fumbling little City man, with his Surrey villa and collection of Meryon etchings, to patronize, and condemn, and to bid him not to be discouraged?

"Yes," he said coldly. "I wrote the play for her. She's the only tragic actress you've had here since Miss Cushman."

The little City man smiled, apparently by elongating his eyes. He laid up, for a future dinner table, a condemnation of this young dramatist, as too "opinionated," too "crude."

"Yes?" he answered. "By the way—my daughter is here; she wants so much to talk to you about the play. Will you come?"

Roger had met this daughter once before. He saw her now, an anæmic girl, in a Liberty dress, standing with her nose in the air, amid a mob of first-nighters. She, too, wished to patronize him and to criticize the oracle. The superiority of a girl of nineteen was more than he could stand.

"Thanks," he said. "Afterwards, perhaps. I must be off now with my friend."

He gave a hurried nod, caught O'Neill's arm, and fled. Two men collided in his path and exchanged criticism with each other.

"Hullo, old man," said one; "what do you think of it?"

"I call it a German farce."

"Yes; rather colourless. It opened well."

Further on, a tall, pale, fat woman, with a flagging jowl, talked loudly to two lesser women.

"I call it simply disgusting. I wonder such a piece should be allowed."

"I wouldn't mind its being disgusting so much," said one of her friends; "but what I can't stand is that it is so uninteresting. There's no meaning. It doesn't *mean* anything. It has no criticism of life."

" They say he's killing himself with chloral," said the third woman.

At the entrance to the smoke-room, they were stopped by the crowd. A lady with fine eyes fanned herself vigorously on the arm of her escort.

" It's very interestin'," she said ; " but, of course, it isn't a play."

" No. It's not a play," said her friend. After a pause, he defined his critical position. " Y'know, I don't believe in all this talk about Ibsen and that. I like a play to be a play."

The smoke-room was full of men with cigarettes. Nearly all had a look of the theatre about them, something clean-shaven, something in the eye, in the fatness of the lower jaw, and in the general exaggeration of the bearing. Something loud and unreal. The pretty girls at the bar were busy, expending the same smile, and the same charm of manner, on each customer, and dismissing him, when served, with an indifference which was like erasure. The friends lighted fresh cigarettes and shared a bottle of Perrier water. The pretty, weary-faced waitress looked at Roger intently, with interested sympathy. She had seen the dress-rehearsal, she was one of his admirers.

Matches scratched and spluttered ; soda-water bubbled into spirits ; the cork extractors squeaked and thumped, with a noise of fizzing. A pale, white-haired man, with an amber cigarette-holder nine inches long, evidently his only claim to distinction, held a glass at an angle, dispensing criticism.

" It's all damned tommy-rot," he said. " All this tosh these young fellers write. It's what I call

German measles. Now we've got a drama. You may say what you like about these Scandinavian people, and Hauptmann, and what's the name of the French feller, who wrote the book about wasps ? They're all. You know what I mean. Every one of them. Like the pre-Raphaelites were; but put them beside our English dramatists; where are they ? "

Someone with an Irish voice maintained in a lull, rather brilliantly, that Shakespeare had no intellect, but that Coriolanus showed a genuine feeling for the stage.

A friend without definite contradiction offered, in amendment, that: " None of the Elizabethans were any good at all; Coriolanus was a Latin exercise. English drama dated from 1893."

A third put in a word for Romeo and Juliet. " Of course, in all his serious work, Shakespeare is a most irritating writer. But in Romeo and Juliet he is less irritating than usual. I like the Tomb scene."

The Irish voice replied that the English had the ballad instinct, and liked those stories which would be tolerable in a ballad; but that intellectual eminence was shown by form, not by an emotional condition. This led to the obvious English retort that form was nothing, as long as the thought was all right; and that anyway our construction was better than the French. The talk closed in on the discussion, shutting it out with babble; nothing more was heard.

The two friends, sipping Perrier water, were sensible of hostility in the house, without hearing definite charges. An electric bell whirred over-

head. Glasses were hurriedly put down; cigarettes were dropped into the pots of evergreens. The tide set back towards the stalls. As they paused to let a lady precede them down a gangway, they heard her pass judgment to a friend.

"Of course, it may be very clever; but what I mean is that it's not amusing. It's not like a play."

A clear feminine voice dropped a final shot in a hush. "Oh, I think it's tremendously second-rate; like all his books. I think he must be a most intolerable young man. I know some friends of his."

Wondering which friends they were, Roger Naldrett took his seat in his box an instant before the curtain rose.

Four minutes later, when the house found that the cap fitted, a line was hissed loudly. It passed, the actors rallied, Miss Hanlon's acting gathered intensity. As the emotional crisis of the act approached, she seemed to be taking hold of the audience. The beauty of the play even moved the author a little. Then, at her finest moment, in a pause, the prelude to her great appeal, a coarse female voice, without natural beauty, and impeded rather than helped, artificially, by a segment of apple newly-bitten, called ironically, "Ow, chyce me," from somewhere far above. The temper of the house as a whole was probably against the voice; but collective attention is fickle. There was a second of hesitation, during which, though the play went on, the audience wondered whether they should laugh, following the titterers, or say "Sh" vigorously in opposition to them. A big man in the stalls decided them, by letting his mirth, decently checked during

the instant, explode, much as an expanded bladder will explode when smitten with a blunt instrument.

"Ow, Charlie!" cried the voice again. Everybody laughed. The big man, confirmed in what had at first alarmed him, roared like a bull. When the laughter ended, the play was lost. No acting in the world could have saved it.

For a moment it went on; but the wits had been encouraged by their success. A few mild young men, greatly daring, bashfully addressed questions to the stage in self-conscious voices. Whistles sounded suddenly in shrill bursts. Somebody hissed in the stalls. A line reflecting on England's foreign policy, or seeming to do so, for there is nothing topical in good literature, raised shouts of "Yah," and "Pro-Boer," phrases still shouted at advanced thinkers in moments of popular pride. At the most poignant moment of the tragedy the gallery shouted "Boo" in sheer anger. The stalls, excited by the noise, looked round, and up, smiling. Songsters began one of the vile songs of the music-halls, debased in its words, its rhythms, and its tune. Their feet beat time to it. The booing made a monotony as of tom-toms; whistles and cat-calls sounded, like wildbirds flying across the darkness. People got up blunderingly to leave the theatre, treading on other people's toes, stumbling over their knees, with oaths in their hearts, and apologies on their lips. The play had come to an end. The cast waited for the noise to cease. Miss Hanlon, the sword at her throat, stood self-possessed, ready with her line and gesture, only waiting for quiet. Two of the actors talked to each other, looking

straight across the stage at the dim mob before them. Roger could see their lips move. He imagined the cynical slangy talk passing between them. He recognized Miss Hanlon's sister standing in one of the boxes on the other side.

The noise grew louder. John O'Neill, leaving his seat, came over to him and shouted in his ear. "You're having a fine row," he shouted.

Roger nodded back to John in the darkness. "Yes, yes," he said. He was wondering why he didn't care more deeply at this wreck of his work. He did not care. The yelling mob disgusted him; but not more than any other yelling mob. He wished that it had but one face, so that he might spit in it, and smite it, to avenge brave Miss Hanlon, the genius cried down by the rabble, who still waited, with the sobs choking her. Otherwise, he did not care two straws. He believed in his work. Beauty was worth following whatever the dull ass thought. He sat on the edge of the box, and stared down at his enemies, "the peegs." A rowdy in the stalls, drawing a bow at a venture, shouted "Author." At that instant the curtain came down, and the lights went up. "Author," the house shouted. "Yah. Author. Boo." Women paused in the putting on of their opera-cloaks to level glasses at him. He saw a dozen such. He saw the men staring. He heard one man, one solitary friend, who strove to clap, abruptly told to "chuck it." "Author," came the shout. "Yah. Boo. Author. Gow 'owm."

He stood up to look at his enemies. One man, a critic, was clapping him, an act of courage in such a house. The rest were enjoying the row, or helping

it, or hurriedly leaving with timid women. Those who jeered, jeered mostly at John O'Neill, who looked liker an author than his friend (i.e. his hair was longer).

"This is nearly martyrdom," said John. "Your work must be better than I thought."

Roger laughed. The people, seeing the laughter, yelled in frenzy. Falempin came from behind the curtain. He looked at the house indifferently, stroking his white beard, as though debating over a supper menu. He glanced absently at his watch, and tapped in a bored manner with his foot. He was trying to decide whether he should insult the "peegs," and gloriously end his career as a theatre manager. Fear lest they should misunderstand his insult, and perhaps take it as a compliment, restrained him in the end, even more than the thought of what his wife would say. He waited for a lull in the uproar to remark coolly that the play would not go on. After a pause, he told the orchestra to play "God Save the King" with excessive fervour, for a long time; which they did, grinning. A few policemen in the pit and gallery directed the religious spirit, thus roused, into peaceful works. The hooters began to pass out of the theatre, laughing and yelling; three or four young men, linking arms, stood across an exit, barring the passage to women. One of them, being struck in the face, showed fight, and was violently flung forth. The others, aiding their leader, fought all down the stairs from the gallery, hindered by the escaping crowd. They suffered in the passage. One of them, with his collar torn off, scuffled on the sidewalk,

crying out that he wanted his "'at." He wasn't going without his "'at."

Meanwhile, in the pit, a dozen stalwarts stood by the stalls barrier, waiting to boo the author as he left his box. The stalls were fast emptying. Two attendants, still carrying programmes, halted under Roger's box to say that it was a "shyme." Roger, at the moment, was writing hurriedly on a programme a rough draft of a note of thanks, praise, and sympathy to Miss Hanlon. It was only when he came to use his faculties that he found them scattered by the agitations of the night. The words which rose up in his mind were like words used in dreams; they seemed to be meaningless. He botched together a crudity after a long beating of his brains; but the result, when written out on a sheet of notepaper, found in the ante-room, was feeble enough.

He twisted the paper swiftly into a tricorne. "Come along, John," he said. "We'll go through the stage; I must leave this for Miss Hanlon."

They passed through the ante-room into a chamber heaped with properties, and thence, by a swift turn, on to the stage, where a few hands were shifting the scenery and talking of the row. On the draughty, zig-zag, concrete stairs, leading to the dressing-rooms, the stage-manager stood talking to a minor actor under a wavering gas-jet enclosed by a wire mesh.

"Quite a little trouble, sir," he said to Naldrett. "Too bad."

"They didn't seem to like it, did they? Which is Miss Hanlon's room?"

"In number three, sir; but there's her dresser, if you've a note for her, sir. There's some ladies with her."

Outside the stage door, in the alley leading to the street, several idlers waited idly for an opportunity for outrage. In the street itself a crowd had gathered at the theatre entrance. A mob of vacant faces stood under the light, staring at the doors. They stared without noise and without intelligence, under the spell of that mesmerism which binds common intellects so easily. Policemen moved through the mob, moving little parts of it, more by example than by precept. The starers moved because others moved. In the road was a glare of cab lights. Light gleamed on harness, on the satin of cloaks, on the hats of footmen.

"When did the age of polish begin?" said Roger.

"When the age of gilt ended," said John. "It's a base age; you can't even be a decent corpse without polish on your coffin. Here we are at the Masquers; shall we sup here, or at the Petits Soupers?"

II

What, do we nod? Sound music, and let us startle our spirits. . . .
Ay, this has waked us.

The Poetaster.

THE act of sitting to table changed John's mood. The lightness and gaiety passed from him. It seemed to Roger that he grew visibly very old and haggard, as the merry mood, stimulated by the excitement of the theatre, faded away. At times, during supper, John gave his friend the impression that the spiritual John was on a journey, or withdrawn into another world. He spoke little, chiefly in monosyllables, making no allusion to the play. He was become a shell, almost an unreal person. He gave no sign of possessing that intellectual energy which made his talk so attractive to young men interested in the arts. Roger's fancy suggested that John was a kind of John the Baptist, a torch-bearer, sent to set other people on fire, but without real fire of his own. He felt that John had lighted an entire city, by some obscure heap of shavings in a suburb, and had now dashed out his torch, so that the night hid him. He realized how little he knew this man, intimate as they had been. Nobody knew him. Nobody knew what he was. There were some who held that John was the Wandering Jew, others that he was a Nihilist, a Carlist, a Balmacedist, a Jacobite, the heir to France, King Arthur, anti-Christ, or Parnell. All had felt the mystery, but none had solved it. Here was

this strange, enigmatic, brilliant man, an influence in art, in many arts, though he practised none with supreme devotion. He had wandered over most of the world; he spoke many tongues; he had friends in strange Asian cities, in Western mining towns, in rubber camps, in ships, in senates. No one had ever received a letter from him. But his rooms were always thronged with outlandish guests from all parts of the world. Looking at him across the table, Roger felt small suddenly, as though John really were a spirit now suddenly lapsing back into the night, after a spectral moment of glowing. He felt the man's extraordinary personality, and his own terrible pettiness in apprehending so little of it. Something was wrong with him, something was the matter with the night. Or had the whole unreal evening been a dream? Or were they all dead, and was this heaven or hell? for life seemed charged with all manner of new realities. He had never felt like this before. Something was changing in his brain. He was realizing his own spiritual advances, in one of those rare moments in which one apprehends truth. It occurred to him, with a sudden impulse to violent laughter, that John, sitting back in his chair, mesmerized by the fantasy of the smoke from his cigarette, was also in a mood of spiritual crisis, attaining long-desired peace.

John watched his cigarette till the ash fell, when the truth seemed fully attained, the soul's step upward made good. He glanced up at Roger like a man just waking from a dream, like a man, long puzzled, at last made certain.

"What are your plans?" he asked suddenly. "You'll go on writing?"

"Yes. I shall go on writing," Roger answered. He was puzzled by the abruptness and detachment of John's manner. "I've got that Louis Quatorze play finished. I shall start on another in a day or two. I've a novel half finished; I told you the fable, I think. I've not done much since the rehearsals began."

"You'll have a great success some day," said John, half to himself. "You'll be all that Wentworth might have been had he lived. You know Wentworth's work?"

"Yes," Roger said. The question surprised him. John was speaking to him as though he were a stranger. They had discussed Wentworth's work a score of times. "What sort of man was he?" he added.

"A great genius in himself. In his work I don't think he was that, though of course he did wonderful things. You told me once that you were in love. How does that go on?"

"I see her sometimes. I can't ask her to marry me. My prospects—well—I live by writing."

"She is rich, I think you said? She lives in Ireland?"

"Yes."

"Love is the devil!" said John abruptly. "I'm going abroad to-morrow, on account of my lungs. I was wondering if I should see you settled before I left."

"Good Lord! You never told me."

"Wentworth used to say that, socially, the body

does not exist. I thought of telling you. But there, there were other reasons. Things which I can't tell you about."

"But where are you going?"

"To a place in South Spain. I can't tell you more. Listen. I believe that I am on the verge of discovering a great secret. It is an amazing thing; I've been working at it with Centeno, that young Spaniard who comes to my rooms. I am going to Spain so that I may work with him in a warm climate."

He rose from his seat excited by the thought of the discovery. He gulped the last of his wine, as though in a sudden fever to be at work. He flung on hat and coat in the same feverish preoccupation. Roger, who had seen him thus before, knew that he was forgotten. His friend was already in those secret rooms at the top of a house in Queen Square. His spirit was there, bowed over the work with the Spanish scholar; the earthly part of him was a parcel left behind in a restaurant to follow as it might. Words from nowhere floated into Roger's mind. It was as though some of John's attendant spirits had whispered to him: "Your friend is busy with some strange doctrine of the soul," said the whisperer. "This world does not exist for him. You are nothing to him; you are only a little part of the eternal, dragging a caddis-worm's house of greeds. He is set free."

He looked up quickly to see John deep in thought, with a waiter, standing beside him, offering an unnoticed bill. Roger paid the bill. In another minute they were standing in the glare of the Circus,

amid tumult and harsh light. Something in the unrhythmical riot broke the dreamer's mood. He looked at Roger absently, as though remembering an event in a past life. A fit of coughing shook him, and left him trembling.

"Your play is a fine thing," he said weakly, as he hailed a hansom. "You are all right. I can't ask you to come round to my rooms; for I am working there with Centeno. I work there far into the night, and I am in rather a mess with packing to-night."

He seemed to pass into his reverie again; for he did not notice Roger's hand. He was muttering to himself. "This is an unreal world; this is an unreal world," between gulps of cigarette smoke. A sudden burst of energy made him enter the cab. Roger gave the cabman the address, and closed the cab's aprons. His friend lifted a hand languidly and sank back into the gloom. The last that Roger saw of him was a white, immobile mask of a face, rising up from the black pointed beard, which looked so like the beard of an Assyrian king. The cab was hidden from sight among a medley of vehicles before Roger realized that his friend was gone.

It struck Roger then that the evening had brought him very near to romance. He had seen his soul's work shouted down by the minotaur. Now the man whom he had worshipped was going away to die. More than the pain of losing the friend was the sharpness of jealousy; for why could not he, instead of Centeno, help that spirit in the last transmutation, in the last glory, when the cracking brain cell let in heaven? He felt

himself judged, and set aside. For an instant an impulse moved him to creep in upon the secret, up the stairs, through the corridor piled with books, to the dark room, hung with green, where the work went forward. He longed to surprise those conspirators over their secret of the soul, and to be initiated into the mystery, even at the sword's point. He put this thought from him; but the shock of John's parting brought it back again. His spirit seemed to flounder in him. He felt stunned and staggered.

He crossed Shaftesbury Avenue wondering how life was to go on with no O'Neill. He had no thought for his play's failure; this sorrow filled his nature. He paused for an instant on the western sidewalk of the avenue so that he might light a cigarette. As he bent over the flame, someone struck him violently between the shoulders. He turned swiftly, full of anger, to confront a half-drunken man whose face had the peculiar bloated shapelessness of the London sot. The man unjustly claimed, with many filthy words, that Roger had jostled against him, and that he was going to —well, show him different. A little crowd gathered, expecting a fight. When the man's language was at its filthiest, a policeman interfered, bidding the drunkard go home quietly. The man asked how anyone could go home quietly with —— toffs running into him. The policeman turned to Roger.

Roger was sickened and disgusted. Charging the man, and causing him to be imprisoned or fined, was not to be thought of. The man was not sober; he had passed into a momentary fury of passion,

and had butted blindly like an enraged bull. The mistake, and the foul talk, and the sudden attentions of the crowd at such a moment when he hoped to be alone, gave Roger a feeling of helpless hatred of himself and of modern life. He turned abruptly. His enemy dogged him for a few steps, dropping filthy names, one by one, while some of the crowd followed, hoping that there would be an assault. The pursuit ended with a snarl. The drunkard turned diagonally across the street, so nearly under two motor-cabs that the crowd lost interest in Roger from that instant.

Roger remembered that a few yards away there was a German restaurant, where some of his friends used to play dominoes over steins of lager. He entered the restaurant, hoping to meet someone; hoping, too, that the kindly foreign feeling which made the place restful and delightful might help him to forget his sorrow and distaste for life. He ordered coffee and cognac, and sat there, sorrowfully smoking, scanning those who entered, but seeing no friend among them.

As he smoked the memories of the evening assailed him. He saw his work hooted from the stage, and John passing from his life, and the sot's bloated mouth babbling filth at him. His nerves were all shaken to pieces by the emotional strain of the past fortnight. He was in a child's mood; the mood of the homesick boy at school. He was as dangerously near hysteria as the drunkard. He longed to be over in Ireland, in the house of that beautiful woman whom he loved, to be in the presence of calm and tenderness and noble thought,

away from all these horrors and desolations. The thought of Ottalie Fawcett calmed him; for he could not think of that beautiful woman and of himself at the same time. Memories of her gave his mind a sweet, melancholy food. One memory especially, of the beautiful lady, in her beautiful, early Victorian dress, with great hat, grey gauntlets, and old pearl earrings, bending over a mass of white roses in the garden, recurred again and again. To think of her intently, and to see her very clearly in a mind acutely excited, was like communion with her. Her image was so sharply outlined in his heart that he felt an exultation, as though their hearts were flowing into each other. One tingling thought of her was like her heart against his. It made him sure that she was thinking of him at that instant, perhaps with tenderness. He tried to imagine her thoughts of him. He tried to imagine himself her, looking out under that great hat, through those lively eyes, a beautiful, charming woman, exquisite, guarded, and infinitely swift of tact. It ended with a passionate longing to get away to Ireland to see her, cost what it might. His heart turned to her; he would go to her. He could not live without love.

The play had ended before ten o'clock. It was now half-past eleven. Roger paid his bill, and turned into Shaftesbury Avenue, thinking that within thirty-six hours he would be set free. This dusty tumult would be roaring to other ears. He would be by the waters of Moyle, among magical glens, knocking at his love's door, walking with her, hearing her voice, sitting with her over the turf

fire, in that old house on the hills, looking over towards Ailsa. That would be life enough. It would give him strength to begin again after his failure and the loss of his friend. His mind was full of her. He turned, as he had so often turned, late at night, to look at the windows of the little upper flat which his love shared with her friend Agatha Carew-Ker. They were seldom in town to use the flat. They came there for flying visits generally in the spring and winter, when passing through London to the Continent. It was a tiny flat of four living-rooms, high up, on the south side of Shaftesbury Avenue; a strange place for two ladies to have chosen, but it was near the theatres and shops. As Roger walked towards it he recalled the last time he had been there, seven months before. He had had tea alone with Ottalie, one misty October evening. For nearly half an hour they were alone in the flat, sitting together by the fire in the dusk, talking intimately, even tenderly; for there was something magical in the twilight, and the companionship was too close, during that rare half-hour, for either to light the lamp. He had known Ottalie since childhood; but never before like this. Her tenderness and charm and grave beauty had never been so near to him. Two minutes more in that dusk would have brought him to her side. He would have taken her hands in his. He would have asked her if life could go back again, after such communion, to the old frank comradeship. Then Agatha came in, with her hardness and bustle and suspicion. The spell had been broken. Agatha rated them for sitting in the dark. When he

lighted the lamp, he was conscious of Agatha's sharp critical eye upon him, and of a certain reproachful jealousy in her tone towards Ottalie. There were little hard glances from one face to the other; and then some ill-concealed feminine manœuvring to make it impossible for him to stay longer. He stayed until Agatha became pointed. That was the last time he had seen Ottalie. He had heard from her from time to time. He had sent her his last novel and his book of tales. She had sent him a silver match-box as a Christmas present. Agatha, in a postscript, had conveyed her "love" to him.

He paused on the north side of the avenue to look at the flat windows high up on the opposite side. He was startled to see a light in Ottalie's bedroom, a long gleam of light where the curtains parted, a gleam dimmed momentarily by someone passing. For five seconds he saw the light, then it was blown out. Someone was in the flat, possibly Ottalie herself. He might, perhaps, see her early the next morning. She might be there, just across the road. She might have been within three hundred yards of him for this last miserable hour; but it was strange that she had not written to tell him that she was coming to town. It could hardly be Ottalie. It might be Agatha, or some friend to whom they had lent the flat for the season. He was eager now for the next day to dawn, so that he might find out. He was utterly weary. He hailed a cab and drove to his rooms in Westminster. The cabman, thinking him an easy subject, demanded more than the excess fare given to him. Roger told him

that he would get no more, and entered the house. The cabman, becoming abusive, climbed down and battered at the knocker, till the approach of a policeman warned him that any further attempts might lead to a summons. He drove away growling.

Roger lived in chambers in one of the old houses of Westminster. He rented a little panelled sitting-room, a bedroom, also panelled, rather larger, and a third room so tiny that a clothes-press and a bath almost filled it. He lit his lamp to see what letters had come for him. There were five or six, none of them from Ottalie. A telegram lay on the table. It was from an evening paper asking for the favour of an interview early the next morning. The row at the theatre was bearing fruit. He opened his letters; but, seeing that they were not amusing, he did not read them. He went into his bedroom to undress. On the mantelpiece was a rehearsal call card, which had given him a thrill of pleasure a fortnight before. Now it seemed to grin at him with a devilish inanimate malice. An etched portrait of O'Neill looked down mournfully from the wall. A photograph of Ottalie on the dressing-table was the last thing noticed by him as he blew out the lamp.

In the next house a member of Parliament lived. His wife was musical, in a hard, accomplished way. She sang cleverly, though her voice was not good. She sang as her excellent masters had taught her to sing. She had profited by their teaching to the limits of her nature. In moments of emotion, when she recognized her short-comings, she quoted to

herself a line from Abt Vogler, "On the earth a broken arc, in the heaven a perfect round." She was an irregular, eccentric lady, fond of late hours. This night some wandering devil caused her to begin to play at midnight, when Roger, utterly exhausted by the strain of the evening, was falling to a merciful sleep. A few bars was enough to waken Roger. The wall between them was not thick enough to dull the noise. The few melancholy bars gathered volume. She began to sing with hard, metallic callousness, with disillusion in each note. Poor lady, the moment was beautiful to her. She could not know that she, in her moment of delight, was an instrument of the malevolent stars next door. Roger sat up in bed with a few impatient words. He knew the lady's song; he had heard Ottalie sing it. Hearing this other lady sing it was instructive. It confirmed him in a theory held by him, that refinement was a quality of the entire personality; that delicacy of feeling, beauty of nature, niceness of tact, were shown in the least movement, in the raising of a hand, in the head's carriage, in the least sound of the voice. Ottalie sang with all the beauty of her character, giving to each note an indescribable rightness of value, verbal as well as musical, conveying to her hearers a sense of her distinction of soul, a sense of the noble living of dead generations of Fawcetts; a sense of style and race and personal exquisiteness. This lady sang as though she were out in a hockey field, charging the ball healthily, in short skirts, among many gay young sprigs from the barracks. She sang like the daughter of a *nouveau riche*. Her song

was a brief liaison between Leipzig and a vulgar constitution.

Two minutes of her song put all thought of sleep from Roger's mind. He lit his lamp and searched for some cigarettes. Something prompted him to take down Wentworth's *Tragedy of Poppaea*. He would read it over until the lady's muscles tired. He lit a cigarette. Propping himself up with pillows he began to read, admiring the precise firmness of the rhythms, and that quality in the style which was all fragrance and glimmer, a fine bloom of beauty, never too much, which marked the artist. The choruses moved him by their inherent music. They were musical because the man's mind, though sternly muscular and manly, was full of melody. They were unlike most modern verse, which is reckoned musical when it shows some mechanical compliance with a pattern of music already in the popular ear. Roger, as a writer not yet formed, was curious in all things which showed personal distinction and striving. This exquisite verse, this power of fine, precise intellectual conception, was reward enough, he thought, for the misery which this poet had suffered from his fellows. Roger wondered how many ladies like the singer on the other side of the wall had asked poor Wentworth to their "At Homes" for any but a vulgar reason. He remembered how Wentworth, a strict moralist soured by a life of suffering, had spoken to one lady. "You will buy my books and lay them on your tables. You will ask me to dinner to amuse yourself with my talk. You have won a reputation for wit by repeating my epigrams. And for which of

my ideas do you care two straws, for which would you sacrifice one least vanity, for which would you outrage one convention? I will not come to your 'At Home.'"

The cigarette was smoked out. The lady, having finished some four songs, now toyed with a little Grieg, a little Bach, a little Schumann, like a delicate butterfly flying by the finest clockwork. Roger, who was now in no mood for sleep, found the music of some value as an accompaniment to *Poppaea*. It was like the light and excitement of a theatre, added to the emotion of the poetry. He read through to the end of the second act, when his eyes began to trouble him. Then he rose, hurriedly dressed, wrapped himself in a Chinese robe, embroidered with green silk dragons, and passed through his sitting-room window on to the balcony above the street. It was a narrow, old-fashioned balcony, big enough for three people, if the people were fond of each other. Structurally it was a part of the balcony of the member's house, but an old straw trellis-work divided the two tenancies at the party wall. Roger placed a deck-chair with its back against the trellis, which shut off the member's balcony from his. He was sheltered from above by a green verandah canopy, and from the street by another trellis about five feet high. He would not sleep now, until four; he knew his symptoms of old. He could not read. It was useless to lie tossing in bed. He sat in the deck-chair mournfully munching salted almonds. He was in a state of unnatural nervous excitement. The music came through the house

delicately to him, softened by two walls, one of them honestly built in the late seventeenth century. He thought that John O'Neill would be distant music to him henceforth. Perhaps the dead look on the living souls as notes in a music, and play upon them, making harmony or discord, according to the power of their wills and the quality of their nature. He could imagine John, who had stricken so many living souls to music, playing on in death, not hampered by the indifference of any one note, but playing upon it masterly, rousing it to music, by striking some kindred note, reaching it through another, as perhaps our dead friends can. But life would be terrible without John. He remembered how Lamb walked about muttering "Coleridge is dead." A great spirit never expresses herself perfectly. She needs many lesser spirits to catch those glittering crumbs and fiery-flung manna seeds. When the bread passes, the disciples serve scraps and preach bakery.

He finished his salted almonds regretfully, remembering that he was out of olives. He lighted another cigarette, and lay there smoking, trying to get calm. It was very still but for the music; for Davenant Street was as quiet as Dean's Yard. The windows were all blank and dark; people were sleeping. Big Ben's noble tone told the quarters. A policeman went past softly, feeling at the doors. Something went wrong in the street lamp a few yards from Roger's perch. It fluttered as though some great moth were struggling in the flame. It died down to a few flagging points of light, leaving the dark street even darker. Big Ben, lifting a

solemn sweet voice, tolled two, with noble melancholy, resigned to death, but hungry for the beauty of life, like the spirit of Raleigh speaking. Ottalie was asleep now, the grey eyes shut, the sweet face lying trustful. John was with the pale young Spaniard, doing what? in the room high aloft there, over Queen Square. London was about to take its hour of quiet. Only the poets, the scholars, and the idlers were awake now. In a little while the May dawn would begin. Even now it was tinging the cherry blossom in Aleppo. The roses of Sarvistan were spilling in the heat. The blades of green corn by Troy gleamed above the river as the wind shook them. Tenedos rose up black, watching the channel, now showing steel.

Roger lighted another cigarette from the embers of the last. It was too quiet to strike a match. The stillness gave him an emotional pleasure. It gave him a sense of power, as though he were the only living spirit in the midst of all this death. He was sorry when the music stopped, for it had made the stillness more impressive. If his thoughts had not been calmed by it, they had at least been made more beautiful, chaotic as they were. The bitterness of the night worked less bitingly. He was conscious of an exaltation of the mind. Up there in the quiet, his devotion to John, his passion for Ottalie, and his love of all high and noble art, seemed co-ordinated, in a grand scheme in which he was both god and man. Standing up, he looked over the trellis into the street, deeply moved. He was here to perfect that magnificent work of art,—himself. John, who had pointed the way, was gone

now. Ottalie, who had inspired him, was waiting with her crown; or perhaps only showing it to lure him, for Nature, prodigal of dust and weed, gives true beauty sparingly. It was for him to follow that lure and to gather strength to seize it. The world was a little dust under his feet. In his soul was a little green seed bursting. It would grow up out of all the grime and muck of modern life, among all the flying grit of the air, into a stately tree, which would shelter the world with beauty and peace. He would be a supreme soul. He would dominate this rabble which hooted him.

He lit another cigarette. John was like a man sent from God. John was unreal. John had marched before him with a torch. Now that ghostly master of his had thrust the torch into the road, pointing him forward with a gesture. The way to perfection lay further on, along a path too narrow for two. Far up the path he could see Ottalie, a glimmer of fragrant beauty, half hidden in a whirling dust-storm which almost swept him off the ledge. The dust should not keep him from her. He would climb to her. They would go on together.

At this instant, as the melancholy intensity of the bells tolled the quarter-hour, the window-door opened on the other side of the straw trellis. A lady came out on to the balcony. She hummed one of Heine's songs in a little low voice, which left the music full of gaps. Roger recognized the singer's voice. He wondered if her husband were with her. He supposed that he must be at the House, and that she was waiting for him. Her

skirts rustled as she moved. A faint scent of violet attracted Roger to her. It was faint, exotic, and suggestive. There is an intoxication in perfumes. She stood there for a full ten seconds before she divined his presence beyond the screen. Her song stopped instantly. Two seconds more convinced her that the person was male and alone. A third suggested that he was a burglar.

"Who is there?" she said quietly. Her voice was anxious rather than fearful.

"I'm so sorry," said Roger. He did not know what else to say. "I live here." He thought that it would be polite to go indoors. He turned to go. To his surprise she spoke again.

"Can you give me a cigarette?" she said. She still spoke quietly. She spoke as if a maidservant were in the room behind her. Roger was flustered. He was a man of quick blood in a condition of excited nerves.

"Yes," he said. "Will you have Russian, or American, or Turkish?"

She appeared to debate for an instant.

"Give me a Russian," she said. "Give it to me through this hole in the matting. Thanks."

"Have you a match?" Roger asked.

"No," she answered. "Give me a light from yours, please. Don't set the mat on fire, though."

He thrust his burning cigarette through the hole in the matting. He felt the pressure of her cigarette upon it. He heard her quickened breathing. He saw the glow brightening through the mat as the tobacco kindled.

"Thanks," she said softly, with a little half-laugh. "How did the play go?"

"The play?" Roger stammered. "It was—— Do you mean—— Which play do you mean?"

"Your play; *The Roman Matron.* You are Mr. Naldrett, aren't you? I met you once for a moment at a house in Chelsea. At Mrs. Melyard's, three years ago. I was just going."

He remembered that hectic beauty Mrs. Melyard. She was like a green snake. She used to receive her intimates (she had no friends) in a room hung with viridian. There were green couches, green-shaded lights, a gum burning greenly in a brazier with green glass sides. She herself was dressed in green, glittering, metallic scales, which made a noise like serpent's hissing as she glided. "Nothing is really interesting except vice," was the only phrase which he could remember of Mrs. Melyard's conversation. She was a feverish character, explained by inherited phthisical taint. Melyard collected tsuba, and fenced archæologically at the Foil Club. He was the best rapier and dagger man in England.

"You are Mrs. Templeton?" he asked. "I remember a lady at Mrs. Melyard's."

"I wasn't married then," she said quickly. "How did the play go?"

"It was booed off."

"I'm sorry," she said. She meant "I am sorry that I asked."

Roger wondered how he could get away. It depended on the lady.

"Can't you sleep?" she asked suddenly.

"No."

"I can't. Will it bore you to come in to talk to us?"

He was used to unconventional people. He saw nothing strange in the woman's invitation. Most of the women known to him would have acted as simply and as frankly in the same circumstances. He knew that Templeton seldom went to bed before two. He took it for granted that Templeton was in the sitting-room; possibly within earshot.

"I'm not very presentable," he said. "Let me change this robe."

"We shan't mind," she said, reassuring him. "Come on."

"Will you let me in?"

"We'll pull down this screen."

They pulled down the old matting with two vigorous jerks. Roger stepped across the partition into the further balcony.

"Come in," she said, passing through the window. "It's dark inside here. Take care of the chair there." She put out a hand to pull the chair away. She did it roughly, making a good deal of noise.

"You sit here," she said. "That chair's comfy. I'll sit here, opposite; here's an ash-tray."

"Could I light a lamp or candle?" Roger asked, taking out his match-box.

"No, thanks," she said. "Don't light up just yet; I'm sick of light. I wish we could live in the dark, like wild beasts."

"London is on your nerves," said Roger. "The noise and worry are upsetting you. You are tired of London, not of light."

He was disappointed by being asked to sit in darkness. He began to lose interest in the lady. She was only a modern dramatic heroine, i.e. a common woman overstrained. He had heard similar affected silliness from a dozen empty women, some of them pretty. He had heard that Mrs. Templeton was pretty. As she refused light, he decided that fame had lied. "She must be a blonde," he thought, "and this room is lit by electricity." He wished that Templeton would come. Templeton would make the situation easier, and his wife's talk more sensible. The lady was silently trying to sum him up.

"No; I'm not tired of London," she was saying. "Only one cannot *live* in London."

"London is on your nerves," Roger repeated. "London is a feverish great spider. It sucks out vitality, and leaves its own poison instead. Look at the arts. A young artist comes up here full of vitality. Unless he is a truly great man, London will suck it all out of him, and make him as poisonous and as feverish as herself."

"Yes, that is quite true," she answered. "I wish we could all be simple and natural, and have time to live. Life is so interestin'. The only really interestin' thing."

"What kind of life do you wish to live?"

"I wish to live my own life. I want to know my own soul. To *live*. In London one is always livin' other people's lives, goin' dinin', doin' things because other people do them. But where else can you meet interestin' people?"

"People are not essential to true life," said

Roger. "I believe that all perfect life is communion with God, conversation, that is, with ideas; 'godly conversation.' People are to some extent like thoughts, like living ideas; for the inner and the outer lives correspond."

"You mean that life is a kind of curve?" the lady interrupted. The question was a moral boomerang. She often used it defensively; she had once felled a scientist with it.

"Life is whatever you like to make it."

"I'm thinkin' of goin' to live in Ireland," said the lady. "The people must be so exquisitely charmin'. Such a beautiful life, sittin' round the fire, singin' the old songs. And then their imagination!"

"Their charm is superficial," said Roger. "Taking the times together, I've lived in Ireland for seven years. I have a cottage there. I do not think that you will sit round many fires, to sing old songs, after the first fine careless rapture, which lasts a month. I'm an Englishman, of course. When in Ireland I'm only one of the English garrison. I may be wanting in sympathy; but I maintain that the Irish have no imagination. Imagination is a moral quality."

"I don't think an Englishman can understand the Irish," said the lady.

"When an Irishman is great enough to escape from the littleness of his race, he becomes a very splendid person," Roger answered. "But until that happens he seems to me to be wanting in any really fundamental quality."

"Oh," said the lady, "you are talking so very

like an Englishman. You aren't interested in life, I see. You are only interested in morals. But you cannot say that the Irish have no imagination. They have wonderful imagination. Look at the way they talk. And their writers: Swift, Goldsmith, Sheridan. And their own exquisite Irish poets."

"I'd give the whole company for one act of Addison's *Cato*," said Roger. "Swift had a limited vision and a diseased mind. He diagnosed his own diseases. Goldsmith wrote some pretty verses. But I do not think that you have read them. Have you? Sheridan wrote a comedy at the age of twenty-four to prove that a sot is nobler than a scholar. Later, he tried to prove it in his own person. I do not read Irish. I have read translations from it. Its distinctive quality seemed to me to be just that kind of windy impersonality which one hears in their talk."

"That is so English of you," said the lady, laughing. "I think that I ought to be very thankful for my Celtic blood."

"Are you a Celt?"

"Yes; from Cornwall. I think it gives me an instinctive love of the beautiful."

"Those who love beauty make it. I, too, have been a Celt. I was a Celt from my twenty-second till my twenty-fifth year. Then I discovered a very curious fact—two facts."

"What were they?"

"First, that the Celt's love of the beautiful is all bunkum. Second, that the people of these islands are mongrels, bred from the scum of Europe.

You can call yourself an Anglo-Saxon, or a Celt, or an Aryan, or a Norman, or a Long-Barrow Palæolith; but if you came from these islands, you are a mongrel, a mongrel of a most chequered kind."

At this instant the door opened suddenly, and the electric light was turned on. In the doorway stood Templeton—a tall, bald, thin-faced man, with foxy moustache and weak eyes. His face showed amazed anger.

"What is this?" he said.

"Let me introduce you," said the lady. "My husband, Mr. Naldrett."

Roger, standing up under the angry gaze of Templeton, was conscious of looking like a fool, in his robe of green silk dragons.

"I don't understand," said Templeton.

"I asked Mr. Naldrett here to talk to me," said the lady.

"So I presume," said Templeton.

"Have you had an interesting sitting?" Roger asked.

Templeton did not answer. He was glaring at his wife. His opera hat was tilted back; his overcoat was unbuttoned; an unlighted cigarette drooped from his mouth.

"Archie," said the lady suavely, "Mr. Naldrett is my friend. I asked him here to talk to me."

"So I see," said Templeton.

"To talk to me," the woman repeated, flaring up, "while you were with Mrs. Liancourt, at her flat in St. Anne's Mansions. I know when the House rose, and where you went afterwards.

If you're goin' to have your friends, I'm goin' to have mine."

Templeton seemed to gulp. He turned to Roger.

"Perhaps you will go," he said.

"Yes, I think I had better," said Roger. "I am sorry that I came."

He rose to go. Mrs. Templeton turned to him.

"A quarter to three," she said sweetly. "You will remember that?"

Roger looked hard at Mrs. Templeton. Never again would he speak civilly to a woman with high cheek-bones, steel eyes, and loose mouth. He bowed to her.

"I didn't deserve it," he said quietly. He walked to the window-door, feeling like some discovered lover in a play. As he entered the balcony, Templeton slammed to the door behind him with a snarl of "Now," as he opened fire on his wife. Templeton's flanks were turned. He was blowing up his ammunition wagons before surrendering.

For a moment Roger felt furious with Templeton. Then he blamed the lady. She had played him a scurvy trick. Lastly, as he began to understand her position, he forgave her. He blamed himself. He felt that he had mixed himself with something indescribably squalid.

As he undressed for bed he blamed the world for its vulgarity, and dreariness, and savagery. The world was too much with him. It was thwarting, and blighting, and destroying him. He longed to get away from the world. Anywhere. To

those Irish hills above the sea, to his beautiful friend, to some peaceful, gentle life, where the squalor of his night's adventures would be unknown and unremembered. He felt contaminated. He longed to purify himself in the sea below his love's home. He thought of that water. He saw it lit by the sun, with tremulous brown sea-leaves folding. Sand at the bottom, six feet down, made a wrinkled blur of paleness, across which a lobster crawled. He would go there. In fifteen hours he would be tearing towards it through the night, past the great glaring towns, on into the hills, to the sea.

A thought of the shaking of the train, and of the uneasy sleep of the people in the carriage, merged gradually into the blur which precedes unconsciousness. Before Big Ben tolled four he was asleep, in that kind of restless nightmare which chains the will without chaining the intelligence. In that kind of sleep which is not sleep he dreamed a dream of Ottalie, which awakened him, in sudden terror, at seven.

III

I prythee, sorrow, leave a little room
In my confounded and tormented mind
For understanding to deliberate
The cause or author of this accident.
The Atheist's Tragedy.

HE thought, as he sat up, that an instant before his true self had walked in the spiritual kingdom, apprehending beauty. Now, with the shock of waking, the glory wavered, like a fire of wet wood, fitfully, among the smoke of the daily life flooding back in his brain's channels. The memory of the beauty came in gleams, moving him to the bone, for it seemed to him that the spirit of his love had moved in the chambers of his brain, bringing a message to him, while the dulnesses of his body lay arrested. A dream so beautiful must, he thought, be a token of all beauty, a sign, perhaps, that her nature was linked to his, for some ecstatic purpose, by the power outside life. Her beauty, her sweetness, her intense, personal charm, all the sacredness that clothed her about, had walked with him in one of the gardens of the soul. That was glory enough; but the dream was intense and full of mystery; it had brought him very near to something awful and immortal, so strange and mighty that only a heart's tick, something in the blood, had kept him from the

presence of the symbol-maker, and from the full knowledge of the beauty of the meaning of life.

The vision seemed meaningless when pieced together. Words in it had seemed revelations, acts in it adventures, romances; but judged by the waking mind, it was unintelligible, though holy, like a Mass in an unknown tongue.

He had found her in the garden at her home, among flowers lovelier than earthly flowers, among flowers like flames and precious stones. That was the beginning of it. Then in the sweetness of their talk he had become conscious of all that her love meant to him, of all that it meant to the power which directs life, of all that his failure to win her would mean, here and hereafter. Life had seemed suddenly terrible and glorious, a wrestle of God and devil for each soul. With this consciousness had come a change in the dream. She had gone from him.

That was the middle of it. Then that also changed. She had left him to seek for her through the world. Suddenly she had sent a message to him. He was walking to meet her. Delight filled him as wine fills a cup. He would see her, he would touch her hand, her eyes would look into his. He had never before been so moved by the love of her. His delight was not the old selfish pleasure, but a rapturous comprehension of her beauty, and of that of which her beauty was the symbol. He knew, as he walked, that the beloved life in her was his own finer self, longing to transmute him to her brightness. A word, a touch, a look, and they would be together in nobleness; he

would breathe the beauty of her character like pure air, he would be a part of her for ever.

So he had walked the streets to her, noticing nothing except the brightness of the sun on the houses, till he had stood upon the stair-top knocking vainly at the door of an empty house. It came upon him then with an exhaustion of the soul, like death itself, that he had come too late. She had gone away disappointed, perhaps angry. The door would never open to him; he would never meet her again; never even enter the hall, dimly seen through the glass, to gather relics of her. Within, as he could see, lay a handkerchief and a withered flower once worn by her, little relics bitterly precious, to be nursed in his heart in a rapture of agony, could he only have them. But he had come too late; he had lost her; his heart, wanting her, would be empty always, a dead thing going through life like a machine. In his vision he could see across to Ireland, to her home. He could see her there; sad that she had not seen him. He had tried to wade to her through a channel full of thorns, which held him fast. From the midst of the thorns he could see a young man, with a calm, strong face, talking to her. Shaken as he was by grief, and prepared for any evil, he realized that this youth was to be her mate, now that he had lost her.

Lastly, at the end of the dream, he had received a letter from her, with the postmark Athens across the Greek stamp. The letter had been the most real part of the dream. It was her very hand, a dashing, virile hand, with weak, unusual f's, t's crossed far to the right of their uprights, and

a negligent beauty in some of the curves of the capitals. The letters were small, the down-strokes determined but irregular, never twice the same. It was the hand of a vivid, charming, but not very strong character. He could not remember what the letter said. Only one sentence at the end remained. "I have read your last book," it ran; "it reads like the diary of a lost soul." There was no signature; nothing but the paper, with the intensely vivid writing, and that one sentence plainly visible. It was even sound criticism. The book of sketches had been self-conscious experiments in style, detached, pictorial presentations of crisis, clever things in their way, but startling, both in colour and in subject, the results of moods, not of perfected personality. The sketches had been ill-assorted; that was another fault. But he had not thought them evil. Sitting up in bed, with the damning sentence still vivid, he felt that they must be evil, because she disliked them. He had created brutal, erring, passionate, and wicked types, with frank and natural creative power. At this moment he felt himself judged. He felt for the first time that the theories of art common to the little party of his friends, were not so much theories of art as declarations of youthful independence, soiled with personal failures of perception and personal antipathies. He was wrong; his art was all wrong; his art was all self-indulgence, not self-perfection. An artist had no right to create at pleasure, ignoble types and situations, fixing fragments of the perishing to the walls of the

world, as a keeper nails vermin. Ottalie's fair nature was not nourished on such work. Great art called such work "sin," "denial of the Holy Ghost," "crucifixion of our Lord." He reached for the offending book; but the words seemed meaningless; some of the intricate prose-rhythms were clever. But anybody can do mechanics and transcribe. Style and imagination are the difficult things. He put the book aside, wondering if he would ever do good work.

He was haunted by the dream until he was dressed. Then the memories of the night before came in upon him, the yells of the mob, hooting his soul's child, the bloated face of the sot, his friend's farewell that had had neither warning nor affection, the indignity of the visit to the Templetons', till the world seemed to be pressing its shapeless head upon his windows, shrieking insults at him, through yielding glass. He began to realize that he had had the concentrated torment of months suddenly stamped upon him in a night. His work, his person, his affections, his social nature had all been trampled and defiled. He wondered what more torments were coming to him with the new day. Some forethought of what was coming crossed his mind when he saw his breakfast-table. Beside his teacup were three or four daily papers, in which, in clear type, were set forth the opinions of Britain's moral guardians concerning their immoral brother.

There were letters first, some of them left from the night before. An obscure acquaintance, a lady in Somersetshire, sent some verses, asking

for his criticism, and for the address of "a publisher who would pay for them." One of the poems began—

> "Hark! hark! hark!
> 'Tis the song of the Lark,
> Dewy with spangles of morn."

A second letter from the same lady enclosed a "Poem on My Cat Peter," which had been accidentally omitted from the other envelope. His agent sent him a very welcome cheque for £108, for his newly completed novel. Next came a letter from a stranger, asking for permission to set some verses to music. A charitable countess asked for verses for her new Bazaar Book. An American News Cutting Bureau sent a little bundle of reviews of his book of sketches. The wrapper on the bundle bore a legend in red ink: —

"We mail you 45 clippings of *The Handful.* Has your Agency sent you that many? If you like our way of business, mail us $1.50, and we will continue to collect clippings under your name."

He disliked their way of business. He flung the clippings unread into the fireplace. The next letter asked him to lecture to the Torch-bearers' Guild, who, it seemed, admired "the virile manliness" of his style. Last of all came a letter from an unknown clergyman denouncing the pernicious influence of *The Handful* in words which, without being rude, were offensive beyond measure. He took up the papers.

The first paper, *The Daily Dawn*, treated him *d'haut en bas*, as follows :—

"M. Falempin's latest theatrical adventure,

A Roman Matron, by Mr. Roger Naldrett (whom we suspect, from internal evidence, to be a not very old lady), was produced last night at the King's Theatre. As far as the audience permitted us to judge, before the piece ended in a storm of groans, we think that it is entirely unsuited to the modern stage. The character of Petronius, finely played by Mr. Danvers, showed some power of psychological analysis; but Mr. (or Miss) Naldrett would do well to remember that the Aristotelian definition of tragedy cannot be disregarded lightly."

The criticism in the second paper, *The Dayspring*, was written in more stately prose than that of *The Dawn*.

"An unreasonable amount of excitement was begotten by the entourage," it ran; "but the piece, which was dull, and occasionally disgusting, convinced us that the New Drama, about which we have heard so much lately, would do better to adequately study a drama more germane to modern ideas, such as we fortunately possess, than libel the institutions from which our glorious Constitution is derived," which was certainly a home-thrust from *The Dayspring*.

The third paper, *The Morning*, in its news column, referred to a disgraceful *fracas* at the King's Theatre. "The police," said *The Morning*, "were soon on the spot, and removed the more noisy members of the audience. Neither M. Falempin, the manager of the theatre, nor Miss Hanlon, who took a leading part in the offending play, would consent to be interviewed, when waited

on, late last night, by a representative of this paper."

The fourth paper, *The Day*, said savagely that *The Matron* should never have passed the Censor, and that its production was an indelible blot on M. Falempin's (hitherto spotless) artistic record. Roger had written occasional reviews for *The Day*, about a dozen, all told. On the same page, and in the column next to that containing the "Dramatic Notes," was a review signed by him. Roger turned to this review, to see how it read. It was a review of a worthless book of verse by a successful versifier. The literary editor of *The Day* had asked Roger to write a column on the book. As the book deserved, at most, three scathing words in a Dunciad, Roger had written a column about poetry, a very pretty piece of critical writing, worth five thousand such books fifty times over. Its only fault was that, being about poetry, it had little reference to the book of verse by the successful poet. So the literary editor had "cut" and "written in" and altered the article, till Roger, reading it, on this tragical morning, found himself self-accused of despicable truckling to Mammon, and the palliation of iniquity, in sentences the rhythms of which jarred, and in platitudes which stung him. He flung down the paper. He would never again write for *The Day*. He would never write another word for any daily or weekly paper. He remembered what d'Arthez says in *Les Illusions Perdues*. He blamed himself for not having remembered before.

He ate very hurriedly, so that he might lose

no time in getting to the flat in Shaftesbury Avenue, to find out if Ottalie were really there. Ottalie; the sight of Ottalie; the sound of her voice even, would end his troubles for him. The thought of her calmed him. The thought of her brought back the dream, with a glow of pleasure. The dream came and went in his mind, seeming now strange, now beautiful. His impression of it was that given by all moving dreams. He thought of it as a kind of divine adventure in which he had taken part. He felt that he had apprehended spiritually the mysterious life beyond ours, and had learned, finally, for ever, that Ottalie's soul was linked to his soul by bonds forged by powers greater than man. A cab came clattering up. There came a vehement knocking at the outer door. "Ottalie," he thought. Selina, the housemaid, entered.

"A lady to see you, sir," she said.

He stood up, gulping, expecting Ottalie. The lady entered. She was not Ottalie. She was a total stranger in a state of great excitement.

"Are you Mr. Naldrett, sir?" she said.

"Yes. Yes. What is it?"

"Mrs. Pollock's compliments, sir, and will you please come round at once?"

"What's the matter?"

"It's Mr. Pollock, sir. He's had a fit or somethink. He's lying in the grate with all the blood gone to his apalex."

"Right," said Roger, stuffing his letters into his pockets. "I'll come. When did it happen?"

"Just now, sir. He'd just gone into the studio,

to begin his painting. Then there came a crash. And the missus and I rush in, and there he was in the grate, sir."

"Yes. Yes. Have you sent for a doctor?"

"No, sir. The missus said to go for you."

They galloped off in the cab together. Pollock with the bloody apalex was a young artist whose studio was in Vincent Square. Roger was fond of him. He had shared rooms with him until his marriage. Roger wondered as he drove what was going to happen to the wife if Pollock died. She was expecting a child. Pollock hadn't made much, poor fellow.

"Very beautiful paintings, Mr. Pollock does, sir," said the lady with enthusiasm. "Oh, he does them beautiful. But they're not like ordinary pictures. I mean, they're not pretty, like ordinary pictures. They're like old-fashioned pictures."

"Yes," said Roger. "Tell me. Is his big picture finished? The one with the lady under a stained-glass window."

"No, sir. It's got a lot to do yet, sir. O I 'ope nothink's going to 'appen to 'im, sir."

"Now here we are," said Roger, as the cab slackened. "Now you drive to the corner there. You'll see a brass plate with DR. COLLINSON on it at the corner house. Tell him to get into the cab with you and come round at once. Go on, now. See that he comes at once."

The door of the flat stood open. Roger entered hurriedly. Just inside he ran against Pollock, who was hastening with a jug of water from the bathroom.

"What is it, Pollock? Are you better?"

"I'm all right," said Pollock, feeling a bandaged head. "It's Kitty. Not me. Come on in, quick."

"But I thought you were having apoplexy."

"That heavy frame full of Dürers came down. The corner caught me over the eye while I was standing by the mantelpiece. It knocked me out. Come on in. I believe Kitty's in a bad way."

Kitty lay on a couch. Her face was not like a human being's face. Pollock, very white, sponged her brow with cold water.

"There, dear," he kept saying. "O God, O God, O God," those words, over and over again.

Roger ran to the bedroom for pillows. There was a fire in the kitchen. He poked it up, and put water to boil.

"Where's her hot-water bottle?" he called. Not getting any answer he looked for it in one of the beds, which had not yet been made up. He filled the bottle and made up the bed. "Now, Charles," he said, "we must get her into bed. I wish your girl would bring the doctor."

Charles looked at him stupidly. "I believe she's dying, Roger," he answered. "O God, I believe she's dying. I've never seen anyone like this. She used to be so pretty, Roger, before all this happened."

"Dying? Nonsense!" said Roger. He turned to the patient. "Kitty," he said, "we're going to put you to bed. Lean on my arm."

The laughter stopped; but the limbs crazily made protest. He had never seen anything like it. It was as though the charming graceful woman

had suddenly been filled by the spirit of a wild animal, which was knocking itself to pieces against the corners in the strange house.

"We shall have to carry her, Charles," he said.

"No, no," said Charles. "She's dying."

The doctor, coming in abruptly, took the battle out of his hands. "Come, come," he said. "Come, Mrs. Pollock. I was afraid that you were ill. You'll feel a lot better when you get to bed. I want you to rest."

He turned to Pollock. "Get her into bed," he said. "Have you got a nurse?"

"No," said Pollock. "She can't come till July."

"Bessie here will do for the moment," said Roger.

Bessie and Pollock helped her to bed. The doctor and Roger talked desultorily.

"No. It's nothing serious. So the frame came down and stunned him? I see. And she came in and found him in the grate? Yes. A nasty shock. Yes. Yes. Of course, it may be serious. It will be impossible to say till I see her. If she had had other children I should say not. But—— Would you say that she is an excitable woman, given to these attacks?"

"No. She used to write a little. She is nervous; but not excitable. Do you find that occupation has much influence on the capacity to resist shock?"

"N–no," said the doctor. "Resistance depends on character. Occupation only modifies character slightly. Life being what it is, one has to be adaptable to survive."

Pollock entered, looking beaten.

"Will you come, doctor?" he said.

They went.

Presently Pollock returned alone. He sat down.

"It's It," he said despondently. "My picture's not done. I shan't have a penny till July. We were counting on its not happening till July. I've not got ten pounds."

"You mustn't worry about that," said Roger. "You must borrow from me. Take this cheque. I'll endorse it. Give me yours for half of it. Don't say you won't. Look here. You must. Now about a nurse. Look here. Listen to me, Charles. You can't leave here. I'll see about a nurse. I know the sort of woman Kitty would like. I'll settle all that with the doctor. I'll send the best I can. You can't leave Kitty, that's certain."

Pollock pulled himself together. The doctor returned. Roger took the addresses of several women, and hurried off to interview them. No cab was in sight. He wasted ten good minutes of nervous tension in trying to find one. He found one at last. As he drove, the desire to be at Ottalie's flat made him forget his friend. He thought only of the chance of seeing Ottalie. He must waste no time. He wondered if he would be too late, as in his dream. He would have to get there early, very early. He prayed that the first nurse on his list might be a suitable woman. The image of the suitable nurse, a big, calm, placid, ox-eyed woman, formed in his mind. If he could find her at once he would be in time. He was longing to be pounding past Whitehall, on the

way to Shaftesbury Avenue. A clock above a hosier's told him that it was nine. No. That clock had stopped. Another clock, further on, over a general store, said eight-fifteen. Yet another, eight-thirty. His watch said eight-thirty-five; but his watch was fast.

Mrs. Perks, of 7 Denning Street, was out. Would he leave a message? No, he would not leave a message. Was it Mrs. Ford? No, not Mrs. Ford, another lady. Perhaps he would come back. He bade the cabman to hurry. Mrs. Stanton, the next on the list, could not come. She was expecting a call from another lady. Mrs. Sanders was out, and "wouldn't be back all day, she said." The fourth, a brisk, level-headed woman, busy at a sewing-machine in a neat room, would come; but was he the husband, and could she be certain of her fees, and what servants were kept?

He said that the fees were safe. He gave her two sovereigns on account. Then she boggled at the single servant. She was not very strong. She had never before been with any lady with only one servant. She wasn't sure how she would get on. She had herself to consider.

"I'm sorry," said Roger. "You would have been the very woman. I'll go on to the hospital."

"Perhaps I could manage," she said.

"Will you come?"

"Is it in a house or a flat?"

"It's in a top flat."

"I dare say I could manage," she said, still hesitating.

Roger, remembering suddenly that Pollock had a married sister, vowed that another lady would be there a good deal in the daytime. She weighed this fact as she stood by the door of the cupboard, about to take her hat.

"I don't think I should care to do it," she said suddenly. "I've not been used to that class of work."

Turning at the door as he went out, he saw that she was watching him with a faint smile. Only the hospital remained.

It took him a long way out of his way. It was twenty past nine when he reached the hospital. Very soon it would be too late for Ottalie. His heart sank. He believed in telepathy. He was thinking so fixedly on Ottalie that he believed that she must sense his thought. "Ottalie, Ottalie," he kept saying to himself. "Wait for me. Wait for me. I shall come. I am coming as fast as I can. Can't you feel me hurrying to you? Wait for me. Don't let me miss you." He discharged his horse-cab, and engaged a motor-cab. Two minutes later he had engaged a nurse. She was in the cab with him. They were whirling south.

"No," she was telling him. "I don't find much difference in my cases. I don't generally see them after. Some are more interesting than others. I like being with an interesting case. I don't mean to say a serious case, and have either of them die, and that. I mean, you know, out of the usual. That's why I like having to do with a first child."

She asked if there were any chance of her being

too late. Roger, with his heart full of Ottalie, could not tell her.

"I shouldn't like to be too late," she said. "I've never missed a case yet. Never. I should be vexed if I were too late with this one. It's a painter gentleman, I think you said it was?"

"Yes."

"I was with a painter's lady once before," she said. "He gave me a little picture of myself."

They reached the flat. Pollock's sister had arrived. The doctor had sent his son for her. Pollock was moodily breaking chalk upon a drawing. The studio was foul with the smoke of cigarettes. "I can't work," he said, lighting a cigarette from the fag-end of the last. "Sit down." He flung away his chalk and sat down. "You've been awfully good to me, Roger. You've got me out of a tragedy. You don't know what it feels like."

"How is Kitty?"

"Pretty well, the doctor thinks. God knows what he would call bad. This is all new to me. I don't want to go through this again. God knows if she'll ever get through it. I shall shoot myself if anything happens to Kitty."

Roger glanced at his watch. It was eighteen minutes to ten. He would have to fly to find Ottalie. If she were in town at all, she would be out by ten. He was sure of that. His motor-cab was waiting. He had a quarter of an hour. But how could he leave Pollock in this state?

"Charles," he said, "I want you to come out with me. You've got on shoes, I see. Take your hat. Kitty is with three capable women and a

doctor. You're only in the way, and making a fuss. Come with me. I'll leave you at the National Gallery, while I see a friend. Then we'll go to Bondini's, in Suffolk Street." He called gently to Pollock's sister. " Mrs. Fane," he said, " I'm taking Charles to.Bondini's, in Suffolk Street."

" A very good thing," said Mrs. Fane. " A man is much better out of the way in times like these."

They started. Just outside Dean's Yard Gate the cab broke down. Roger got out. " What's the matter ? " he asked.

" Nothing much, sir," said the man, already busy under the bonnet. " I won't keep you a minute. Get in again, sir."

A hand touched Roger's arm. He turned. A total stranger, unmistakeably a journalist, was at his side. Roger shuddered. It was an interviewer from *The Meridian.*

" Mr. Naldrett ? " said the interviewer, taking a long shot. " I recognized you by your portrait in *The Bibliophile.* A lucky meeting. Perhaps you didn't get my telegram. I called round at your rooms just now, but you were out. I want to ask you about your play *The Matron.* It attracted considerable attention. Will you please tell me if you have any particular ideas about tragedy ? "

" Yes," said Roger ; " I have. And I'm going to express them. I'm in a great hurry ; and I must refuse to be interviewed. Please thank your editor from me for the honour he has done me ; but tell him that I cannot be interviewed."

" Certainly not, since you wish it," said the journalist. " But I would like to ask you one thing.

I am told your play is very morbid. Are you morbid ? You don't look very morbid."

" I am sorry," said Roger. " But I am not morbid."

" Mr. Naldrett," said the journalist, " are you going to write any more tragedies like *The Roman Matron ?* "

" I have one finished and one half finished," said Roger.

" I hope, Mr. Naldrett," said the journalist, " that you have written them for ordinary people, as well as to please yourself. Writing to please one's self is very artistic. But won't you consider Clapham, and Balham, and Tooting ? How will you please them with tragedies ? A good comedy is what people like. They want something to laugh at, after their day's work. They're quite right. A good comedy's the thing. Anybody can write a tragedy. What's the good of making people gloomy? One wants the pleasant things of life, Mr. Naldrett, on the stage. One goes to the theatre to be amused. There's enough tragedy in real life without one getting more in the theatre. I suppose you've studied Ibsen, Mr. Naldrett ? "

" Have not you ? "

" I don't believe in him. He may be a thinker and all that, but his view of life is very morbid. He is a decadent. Of course, they say his technique is very fine. But he has a mind like a sewer."

" Quite ready, sir," said the chauffeur, swinging himself into his seat.

" I must wish you good-bye, here," said Roger to the interviewer. " Mind your coat. It's caught in

the door. Mind you thank your editor." The cab snorted off, honking. The interviewer gazed after it. "H'm," he said, with that little cynical nod with which the unintelligent express comprehension. "So that's the new drama, is it?"

The car reached Trafalgar Square without being stopped by the traffic. St. Martin's clock stood at a few minutes to ten. Roger was in the dismal mood of one who, having given up hope, is yet not certain. He dropped Pollock at the Gallery, and then sped on, through Leicester Square, up a little street full of restaurants and French book shops. The car was stopped by traffic at the end of this street. Roger leapt out, paid the man hurriedly, and ran into the Avenue. Within thirty seconds, he was running up four flights of stairs to the door on which he had knocked in his vision.

He peered through the glass in the door. As in his dream, something lay in the passage beyond, some glove or handkerchief or crumpled letter, with a shaft of sunlight upon it from an open door. No one came to open to him; but Roger, knocking there, was conscious of the presence of Ottalie by him and in him; he felt her brushing past him, a rustling, breathing beauty, wearing a great hat, and those old pearl earrings which trembled when she turned her head. But no Ottalie came to the door, no Agatha, no old Mrs. Hicks the caretaker. The flat was empty. After a couple of minutes of knocking, an old, untidy, red-faced woman came out from the flat beneath, gasping for breath, with her hand against her side.

"No use your knockin'," she said crustily.

"They're gawn awy. They i'n't 'ere. They're gawn awy."

"When did they go?" asked Roger, filled suddenly with leaping fire.

"They're gawn awy," repeated the old woman. "No use your knockin'. They're gawn awy." She gasped for a moment, eyeing Roger with suspicion and dislike; then turned to her home with the slow, uncertain, fumbling movements of one whose heart is affected.

Roger was left alone on the stairs, aware that he had come too late.

The stairs were covered with a layer of sheet-lead. When the old woman had shut her door, Roger grovelled down upon them, lighting match after match, in the hope of finding footmarks which might tell him more. Agatha had rather long feet, Ottalie's were small, but very well proportioned. Mrs. Hicks's feet were disguised by the boots she wore. A scrap of brown linoleum on the stair-head bore evident marks of a man's hobnail boots which had waited there, perhaps for an answer. There were other, non-committal marks, which might have been made by anybody. On the whole, Roger fancied that a woman had made them, when going out, with dry shoes, that morning. The problem now was, had she left London for Ireland or for the Continent? With some misgivings, he decided against Ireland. On former occasions she had always made her stay in London after her visit to the Continent. If she had been staying in London for more than one night, she would have written to him; he would have seen her. As she had not

written to him, she was plainly going abroad, probably for a month or six weeks, after resting for one night on the way. He would not see her till the middle of the summer. That she had been in town, for at least one night, was plain from what the woman had said. The thought that only a few hours ago she had passed where he stood, came home to him like her touch upon him. He sat down upon the stair-head till his disappointment was mastered.

He took a last look through the door-glass at the crumpled thing, glove, letter, or handkerchief, lying in the passage. Then he went out into the avenue. The disappointment was very bitter to him. It was so strong an emphasis upon the prophetic quality of his dream. Ottalie had been there, waiting for him. He had come there too late. He had missed her. The thought that he had missed her, suggested the cause. He would have to go back to Pollock. He could not leave his friend alone in that wild state of mind. A smaller man would perhaps have felt resentment against the cause. Roger was without that littleness. He saw only the tragic irony. He saw life being played upon a great plan. He felt himself to be a fine piece set aside from his own combination by one greater, stronger, more wonderful. It seemed very wonderful that he had been kept (so unexpectedly) from Ottalie, by the one thing in the world strong enough so to keep him. Nothing but a matter of life and death could have kept him from her.

A lively desire sprang up in him to know whither she had gone. This (he thought) he could find out,

without difficulty, from a Bradshaw. If she were going to Greece, she would go by one of two ways. For a few minutes he had the hope that she might not yet have left London, that he might catch her at the station. A Bradshaw showed him that this was possible, since, going by one route, she would not have to start till after seven in the evening. But, if she had chosen that route, why should she have closed the flat so early? He saw no answer to the question. Still, the uncertainty preyed upon him and flattered him at the same time. She might be there at seven. He would go to the station, in any case. Would it were seven! He had nine hours to live through.

He walked hurriedly to the National Gallery. He remembered, when he entered, that he had made no rendezvous with Pollock. He expected to find him before the *Ariadne*. He was not there. He was not before his other favourite, *The Return of Ulysses*. He was not in any of the little rooms opening off the Italian rooms. A hurried walk round all the foreign schools showed that Pollock was not in that part of the Gallery at all. Very few people were in the Gallery at that hour. There could be no mistake. He tried the English rooms, without success. He described Pollock to the keepers of the lower stairs. "No, sir. No one's gone down like that." Search in the basement, in the little rooms where the Turner water-colours and Arundel prints are kept, showed him that Pollock was not in the Gallery. He wished to be quite certain. He made a swift beat of the French and Spanish rooms, and thence, by the Dutch and

Flemish schools, to the Italian rooms. Here he doubled back upon his tracks, to avoid all possibility of mistake. He was now certain Pollock was not in the Gallery. Very probably he had never entered it. What had become of him ?

He could hardly have gone to the Portrait Gallery, he thought. Yet it was possible. Pollock was in an excited state of mind. He was hardly in a fit state to be out alone. Roger felt anxious. He hurried to the Portrait Gallery. After a long search, upstairs and downstairs, in those avenues of painted eyes, he decided that Pollock was not there, either. He must have gone to Bondini's. Suffolk Street was only a quarter of a mile away. Roger hurried on to look for him at Bondini's. But no. He was not at Bondini's. Where, then, could he be ?

By this time, Roger was alarmed for his friend. He thought that something must have happened to Kitty. He took a cab to Vincent Square to make sure. Pollock let him in. He was smoking a cigarette. His bandage gave him a one-eyed look, infinitely depressing.

" I'm sorry, Roger," he said ; " I couldn't keep away from Kitty. She's quieter, but no better. O God, Roger, I don't know how men can be unkind to women. I don't know what I shall do without her, if anything happens to her."

" You must not lose heart, like this," Roger said. " I understand, very well, what you are feeling. But you ought not to expect evil in this way. Very, very few cases go wrong, now. I was afraid that something had happened to you. Will you come to my rooms for a game of chess ? Then

we could lunch together, and go on, perhaps, to Henderson's. He has finished the picture he was working on."

Pollock was not to be tempted. He would not leave Kitty. After talking with him for nearly an hour, Roger left him, promising to come back before long, to enquire.

When he got outside, into the street, with no definite, immediate object to occupy his mind, he was assailed by the memories of his succession of mishaps. He could not say that one of them hurt more than another. The loss of Ottalie, following so swiftly on the dream, made him miserable. The destruction of his play by the critics made him feel not exactly guilty, but unclean, as though the rabble had spat upon him. He felt "unclean," in the Levitical sense. He had some hesitation in going to mix with his fellows.

He kept saying to himself that if he were not very careful, the world would be flooding into his mind, trampling its garden to mud. It was his duty to beat back the world before it fouled his inner vision. If he were not very careful he would find that his next work would be tainted with some feverish animosity, some personal bitterness, or weakness of contempt. It was his duty as a man and as an artist to prevent that, so that his mind might be as a hedged garden full of flowers, or as a clear, unflawed mirror, reflecting only perfect images. The events of the night before had broken in his barriers. He felt that his old theory, laid aside long before, when he first felt the fascination of modern artistic methods, was true, after all;

that the right pursuit of the artist was the practice of Christianity. He found in the National Gallery, in the battle picture by Uccello, in the nobleness of that young knight, riding calmly among the spears, a healing image of the artist. He lingered before that divine young man with the fair hair until one o'clock. He passed the afternoon at a table in the British Museum, reading all that he could find about Ottalie. There was her name in full in the Irish Landed Gentry. There were the names of all her relatives, and the names of their houses. It was an absurd thing to read these entries, but the names were all stimulants to memory. He knew these people and places. They took vivid shape in his mind as he read them. He had read them before, more than once, when the craving for her had been bitter in the past. He knew the names of her forebears unto the third and fourth generation. A volume of *Who's Who* gave him details of her living relatives. A married uncle's recreations were "shooting and hunting." A maiden aunt had published *Songs of Quiet Life*, in 1902. Her older brother, Leslie Fawcett, had published a novel, *One Summer*, in 1891. Both these volumes lay beside him. He read them again, for the tenth time. Both were very short works; and both, he felt, helped him to understand Ottalie. Neither work was profound; but both came from a sweet and noble nature, at once charming and firm. There were passages in the songs which were like Ottalie's inner nature speaking. In the novel, in the chapter on a girl, he thought that he recognized Ottalie as she must have been long ago.

The volume of the Landed Gentry gave him pity for the historian who would come a century hence, to grub up facts for his history. Ottalie, dear, breathing, beautiful woman, witty, and lovely-haired, and noble like a lady in a poem, would be to such a one " 3rd dau.," or, perhaps, mere " issue."

At five o'clock, he put away his books. He went to drink tea at a dairy, in High Holborn. He entered the place with some misgivings, for his two emotions made the world distasteful to him. The memory of the night before made him feel that he had been whipped in public. The thought of Ottalie made him feel that the real world was in his brain. He shrank from meeting anybody known to him. That old feeling of " uncleanness " came strongly over him. The stuffy unquiet of the Museum had at least been filled by preoccupied, selfish people. Here in the tea-shop, everybody stared. All the little uncomfortable tables were peopled by pairs of eyes. He felt that a woman giggled, that a young man nudged his fellow. Stepping back to let a waitress pass, he knocked over a chair. The place was cramped; he felt stupidly awkward and uncomfortable. He blushed as he picked up the chair. Everybody stared. It seemed to him that they were saying, " That is Mr. Naldrett, the author of the piece which was booed off last night. They say it's very immoral. Millie was there. She said it was a silly lot of old-fashioned stuff. What funny eyes he's got. And look at the way he puts his feet."

He sat down in a corner, from which he could survey the room. A paper lay upon the table; he

picked it up abstractedly. It was a copy of *The Post Meridian.* Somebody had rested butter upon the upper part of it. He glanced at it for an instant, just long enough to see a leading article below the grease mark. "Drama and Decency," ran the scarehead. It went on to say that the London public had once again shewn its unerring sense of the fitness of things over Mr. Naldrett's play. He dropped the paper to one side, and wiped the hand which had touched it. He felt beaten to bay. He stared forward at the house so fiercely that a timid lady, of middle age and ill-health, possibly as beaten as himself, turned from the chair opposite before she sat down.

There were no friends of his there, except a red-haired, fierce little poet, who sat close by, reading and eating cake. The yellow back of *Les Fleurs du Mal* was propped against his teapot. He bit so fiercely that his beard wagged at each bite. Something of the fierceness and passion of the *Femmes Damnées*, or of *le vin de l'Assassin*, was wreaked upon the cake. There came a muttering among the bites. The man was almost reading aloud. A memory of Baudelaire came to Roger, a few grand melancholy lines :—

> "La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,
> Et qui dort sans sommeil sous une humble pelouse,
> Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs.
> Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
> Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
> Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
> Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats."

He wondered if it would be like that. A waitress brought him tea and toast. He poured a little tea

into his cup, thinking of a man now dead, who had drunk tea there with him a year ago. One was very callous about the dead. He wondered if the dead were callous about the living, or whether they had of *grandes douleurs*, as the poet thought. He felt that he would not mind being dead, but for Ottalie. He wondered whether Ottalie had read the papers. He buttered some toast and laid it to one side of his plate, a sort of burnt offering to the dead. A line on the bill of fare caught his eye. "Pan-Bos. Our new Health Bread. Per Portion, 2d." His tired mind turned it backwards, ".d2 ,noitroP reP daerB." "I am going mad," he said to himself. "Shall I go to Ireland to-night?"

Something warned him that if he went to Ireland, Ottalie would not be there. With Ottalie away, it would be intolerable. There would be her house, up on the hills, and all those sycamores, like ghosts in the twilight, ghosts of old men brooding on her beauty, like the old men in Troy when Helen passed. No. He could not bear Ireland with her away. He thought of the boat-train with regret for the old jolly jaunts. The guard with a Scotch accent, the carriage in front which went on to Dundee, the sound of the beautiful Irish voice ("voce assai più che la nostra viva"), and then the hiring of rug and pillow, knowing that one would wake in Scotland, among hills, running water, a "stately speech," and pure air. It would not be wise to go to Ireland. If he went now, with Ottalie away, he might not be able to go later, when she would be there. It would be nothing without her. Nothing but lonely reading, writing, walking,

and swimming. It would be better not to go. Here the poet gulped his cake, rose, and advanced on Roger.

"How d'you do?" he said, speaking rapidly, as though his words were playing tag. "I've just been talking to Collins about you. He's been telling me about your play. I hear you had a row, or something."

"Yes. There was a row."

"Collins has been going for you in *The Daystar*. He says you haven't read Aristotle, or something. Have you seen his article?"

"No. I haven't seen it."

"Oh, you ought to read it. Parts of it are very witty. It would cheer you up."

"What does he say?"

"He says that—— Oh, you know what Collins says. He says that you—I believe I've got it on me. I cut it out. Where did I put it?"

"Never mind. I'm not interested in Collins."

"Aren't you? He's very good. I suppose your play'll be produced again later?"

"I think not."

He got rid of the poet, paid his bill, and walked out. Outside he ran into Hollins, the critic of *The Week*. He would have avoided Hollins, but Hollins stopped him.

"Ah, Naldrett," he said, "I've just been going for you in *The Week*. What do you mean by that third act? Really. It really was——"

It gave Roger a kind of awe to think that this man had been damning other people's acts before he was born.

"What was wrong with the third act? You didn't hear it."

"You must read M. Capus," said Hollins, passing on. "I shall go for you until you do."

A newsboy, with a voice like a bird of doom, flying in the night, held a coloured bill. "Drama and Decency," ran the big letters. Another, offering a copy, shewed, as allurement, "*'ceful Fracas.*" The whole town seemed angry with him. He crossed into Seven Dials, and along to St. Martin's Lane, where he knew of a quiet reading-room. Here he hid.

IV

There's hope left yet.
The Virgin Martyr.

AT seven o'clock he went to the station, hoping (against his better judgment) that he might see Ottalie at the train. The train was very crowded. The travellers wore the pleased, expectant look with which one leaves an English city. Ottalie was not among them. He went down the train twice, in opposite directions, without success. She was not there. She must have started that morning. He had missed her.

He sat down on one of the station benches. His world seemed slipping from him. He told himself that to-morrow he would have to work, or all these worries would destroy him. He felt more lonely than he had ever felt in his life. A week before, he would have had O'Neill, Pollock, and another friend, now abroad. O'Neill was gone, without a farewell. Pollock was fighting his own battles, with poor success. Ottalie was thundering across France, or, perhaps, just drawing into Paris.

A longing to see someone drove him out of the station. He walked to Soho, to a Spanish restaurant, where some of his friends sometimes dined.

Here, at night, the curious may visit Spain, and hear the guttural, lisping speech, and munch

upon chuletas, and swallow all manner of strangeness in cazuelas. Very bold young men cry aloud there for "Mozo," lisping the z. The less bold signal with the hand. The timid point, and later, eat that which is set before them, asking no question, obeying Holy Writ, though without spiritual profit.

On entering the place, he bowed to the Scotch-looking, heavily-earringed Spanish woman, who sat at the desk reading *Blanco y Negro*. She gave him a "Buenas tardes," without lifting her eyes. Then came, from his right, a cry of "Naldrett!"

Two painters, a poet, and proportionable womankind, were dining together there, over the evening papers.

"How are you?" said one of the painters.

"We've just been reading about you," said the other.

"Reading the most terrible things," said the poet.

"Shew him *The Orb*. *The Orb's* the best."

"No. Shew him *The Planet*. The one who says he ought to be prosecuted."

Roger, refusing *Orb* and *Planet*, shook hands with one of the ladies. She was a little actress, delicate, fragile, almost inhuman, with charm in all she did. She said that she had been reading his book of *The Handful*, and had found it very "interesting." She wanted Roger to come to tea, to talk over a scheme of hers. It dawned on Roger that she was saving him from his friends.

"You're the man of the moment," said the poet.

"Don't you pay any attention to any of them," said the painter who had first spoken. "You may be quite sure that when one has to say a thing in a hurry, as these critics must, one says the easiest thing, and the thing which comes handiest to say. If I paid attention to all they say about me I should be in a lunatic asylum. Besides, what does it matter what they say? Who are they, when all is said?"

The talk drifted into a wit combat, in which the seven set themselves to define a critic with the greatest possible pungency and precision. Having done this, to their own satisfaction, they set themselves to the making of a composite sonnet on the critic, upon the backs of bills of fare. One of the painters drew an ideal critic, in the manners, now of Tintoret, now of Velasquez, now of Watteau. The other, who complained that old masters ought to be ranked with critics, because they spoiled the market for living painters, drew him in the manner of Rops.

After dinner, Roger walked home by a round-about road, which took him past his theatre. A few people hung about outside it, staring idly at a few others who were entering. His play was still running, it seemed, in spite of the trouble. Falempin was brave.

He walked back to his rooms, wondering why he had not gone to Ireland that night. London oppressed and pained him. He thought it an ugly city, full of ugly life. He was without any desire to be a citizen of such a city. He disliked the place and her people; but to-night, being, perhaps, a

little humbled by his misfortunes, he found himself wondering whether all the squalor of the town, its beastly drinking dens, its mobs of brainless, inquisitive shouters, might not be changed suddenly to beauty and noble life by some sudden general inspiration, such as comes to nations at rare times under suffering. He decided against it. Patience under suffering was hardly one of our traits.

On his sitting-room table was a letter from Ottalie, bearing the London post-mark across the Greek stamps, and underneath them the legend, "2d. to pay." By the date on the letter it had been ten days in getting to him. He opened it eagerly, half expecting to find in it the very letter of the dream, though something told him that the dream-letter had contained her essential thoughts, the letter in his hand the worldly covering of those thoughts, translated into earthly speech with its reservations and half-heartedness. He learned from this letter that she had been for a month in Greece, and was now coming home. She would be for four days, from the 7th to the 11th, at her flat in London. She hoped to see him there, before she returned to Ireland. To his amazement the postscript ran: "I have read your last book. It reads like the diary of a lost soul," the very words seen by him in dream. For the moment this did not move him so deeply as the thought that this was the 11th of the month. She had been in London with him for the last three or four days, and he had never known it. He had seen her light blown out the night before. If he had had a little sense he would have called on her early that morning

before he had breakfasted. Had he done so, he would have seen her, he would have driven with her to the station, he could, perhaps, have travelled with her to Ireland. The bitterness of his disappointment made him think, for a moment, meanly of Agatha, who, in his fancy, had kept them apart. He suspected that Agatha had held back the letter. How else could it have been posted in London with Greek stamps upon it?

Then came the thought that she had not gone to Ireland that morning. He had never known her go back to Ireland by the day-boats. She liked to sleep in the train, and save the daylight for life. His knowledge of her told him what had happened. She had taken her luggage to the station, soon after breakfast. Having done this, she had passed the day in amusement, dined at the station hotel, and now——

He sat down, beaten by this last disappointment. Now she was steaming north in the night express to Port Patrick. She had only just gone. She was within a dozen miles of him. The train did not start till eight. It was now only fourteen minutes past. If he had not been a fool; if he had only come home instead of going to the station!

"Selina," he cried down to the basement, "when did this letter come? This letter with the foreign stamp."

"Just after you'd gone out this morning, sir."

Five minutes' patience would have altered his life.

"A lady come to see you, sir."

"What was her name?"

"She didn't leave a name, sir."

"What was she like? When did she come?"

"She came about a few minutes before nine, sir. She seemed very put out at not finding you."

"Had she been here before?"

"I think she was the lady come here one time with another lady, a dark lady, when you 'ad the suite upstairs, sir. I think she come in one evenin' when you read to them."

Ottalie had been there. It must have been Ottalie.

"I told her you was gone awy, sir. You 'adn't said where to."

He thanked Selina. He bit his lips lest he should ask whether the visitor had worn earrings. He went back into his room and sat down. He had not realized till then how much Ottalie meant to him. A voice rang in his brain that he had missed her, missed her by a few minutes, through his own impatience, through some chance, through some juggling against him of the powers outside life. All his misery seemed rolled into a leaden ball, which was smashing through his brain. The play was a little thing. The loss of John was a little thing. Templeton was farcical, the critics were little gnats, but to have missed Ottalie, to have lost Ottalie! He tasted a moment of despair.

Despair does not last long. It kills, or it goads to action. With Roger it lasted for a few seconds, and then changed to a passion to be on the way to her. But he would have to wait, he would have to wait. There were all those interminable hours to wait. All a whole night of purgatory. What could

he do meanwhile ? How could he pass that night ? What could he do ? Work was impossible. Talk was impossible. He remembered then, another thing.

He opened his Bradshaw feverishly. Yes. There was another boat-train to Holyhead. He could be in Dublin a little after dawn the next day ; " 8-45 from Euston." He could just do it. He would catch that second boat-train. It was a bare chance ; but it could be done. He could be with Ottalie by the afternoon of the next day. But money ; he had not enough money. Five minutes to pack. He could spare that ; but how about money ? To whom could he go for money ? Who would have money to lend upon the instant ? It would have to be someone near at hand. Every second made his task harder. Where would there be a cab ? Which of his friends lived on the way to Euston ? Who lives between Westminster and Euston ? It is all park, and slum, and boarding-house. Big Ben, lifting his voice, intoned the quarter.

He caught a cab outside Dean's Yard. He drove to a friend in Thames Chambers. The friend lent him a sovereign and some loose silver. He had enough now to take him to Ireland. He bade the cabman to hurry. The newsboys were busy in the Strand. They were calling out something about winner, and disaster. He saw one newsbill flutter out from a man's hand. " British Liner Lost," ran the heading. He felt relieved that the monkey-mind had now something new to occupy it. The changing of the newsbill heading made him feel cleaner.

Up to the crossing of Holborn, he felt that he would catch the train. At Holborn the way was barred by traffic. The Euston Road was also barred to him. He missed the train by rather more than a minute. He was too tired to feel more disappointment. The best thing for him to do, he thought, would be to sleep at home, catch the boat-train in the morning and travel all day. That plan would land him in Ireland within twenty-four hours. He could then either stay a night in port, or post the forty miles to his cottage. In any case, he would be with Ottalie, actually in her very presence, within forty hours. By posting the forty miles he might watch the next night outside her window, in the deep peace of the Irish country, almost within sound of the sea. The thought of the great stars sweeping over Ottalie's home, and of the moon coming up, filling the valley, and of the little wind which trembled the leaves, giving, as it were, speech to the beauty of the night, moved him intensely. In his overwrought mood, these things were the only real things. The rest was all nightmare.

Driving back from Euston, he noticed another *affiche*, bearing the words, " Steamer Sunk. Lives Lost." He paid no attention to it. He wondered vaguely, as he had often wondered in the past, what kind of a mind browsed upon these things. A disaster, an attack upon the Government, and a column of betting news. That was what God's image brooded upon, night after night. That was what God's image wrote about nightly, after an expensive education.

He was very tired; but there could be no rest

for him till he had enquired after Mrs. Pollock. She had given birth to a little girl, who was likely to live. She herself was very weak, but not in serious danger. Pollock was making good resolutions in a mist of cigarette smoke. Roger was not wanted there. He went home, to bed, tired out. He slept heavily.

He was fresh and merry the next morning. He packed at leisure, breakfasted at ease, and drove away to the station, feeling like a boy upon a holiday. He was leaving this grimy, gritty wilderness. He was going to forget all about it. In a few hours he would be over the border, in a new land. That night he would be over the sea, so changed, and in a land so different, that all this would seem like a horrid, far-away dream, indescribably squalid and useless. London was a strong, poisonous drug, to be taken in minute doses. He was going to take a strong corrective.

The train journey was long and slow; but after Carlisle was passed, his mind began to feel the excitement of it. In a couple of hours he would be in the steamer, standing well forward, watching for the double lights to flash, and the third light, further to the south, to blink and gleam. The dull, low, Scottish landscape, where Burns lived and Keats tramped, gave way to irregular low hills, indescribably lonely, with boggy lowland beneath them and forlorn pools. He looked out for one such pool. He had often noticed it before, on his journeys that way. It was a familiar landmark to him. Like all the rest of that Scottish land, it was associated in his mind with Ottalie. All the journey

was associated with her. He had travelled past those hills and pools so often, only to see her, that they had become a sort of ritual to him, a part of seeing her, something which inevitably led to her. After the hill with the cairn, he saw his landmark. There glittered the pool under the last of the sun. The little lonely island, not big enough for a peel, but big enough, years ago, for a lake-dwelling, shone out in a glimmer of withered grass. A few bents, bristling the shallows, bowed and bowed and bowed as the wind blew, A reef of black rocks glided out at the pool's end, like an eel swimming. Roger again had the fancy, which had risen in his mind before a dozen times, when passing the pool, that he would like to be a boy there, with a toy boat. Another landmark tenderly looked for, was a little white house rather far from the line, high up on the moor. He had once thought (in passing) that that would be a pleasant place for a week's stay when he and Ottalie were married. The tenderness of the original fancy lingered still. It had become an inevitable part of the journey. After a few minutes of looking, it came into view, newly white-washed, or, it may be, merely very bright in the sunset. A woman stood at a little garden gate. He had seen her there once before. Perhaps she looked out for this evening train. It might be an event in her life. She must be very lonely there, so many miles from anywhere. After this, he saw only one more landmark, a copse of spruce-fir by the line. A faint mist was gathering. There was going to be a fog. The boat would make a slow passage.

The mist was dim over everything when the train

stopped. He got out on to a platform which was wet with mist. Wet milk-cans gleamed. Rails shone below his feet. A bulk of a mail-train rose up, vacant and dim. People shouted and passed. There was a hot whiff of ship's engine. A man passed, with nervous hurry, carrying two teacups from the refreshment-room. Somebody cried out to come along with the mails. An Irish voice answered excitedly, with a witty bitterness which defined the owner to Roger, in vivid outline. Mist came driving down under the shed. A few moist steps took him to a rail of chains, beyond which was motionless sea, a dim, grey-brown under the mist, with a gull or two drifting and falling. A row of lights dimly dying away beyond, shewed him the steamer. The gangway slanted down, dripping wet from the handrail. A man was saying that "Indeed, it was," in the curt, charming accent of the hills.

He did not recognize the steamer. Her name, seen upon a life-belt, was new to him. He did not remember a *Lady of Lyons* on this line. He laid his bag in a corner of the saloon, where already timid ladies were preparing for the worst, by lying down, under rugs, with bottles of salts at hand. The smell of the saloon, the smells of disinfectant, oil, rubber, and food, mixed with the sickliness of a place half aired and over-heated, drove him on deck again. An elderly man was telling his wife that it had been a terrible business. The lady answered with the hope that nothing would happen to them, for what would poor Edie do ?

Somebody near the gangway, a hills-man by his speech, probably the ticket-collector, or mate, was

way with lonely old people, who talk to themselves) that they were sometimes audible. "I'll do you no peas for your supper, my man," was one of her asides, when he helped himself sparingly to peas. "It's easy seen you're only an Englishman," was another, at his national diffidence towards a potato. Roger wondered what was wrong, and how soon he would become again "the finest young man ever I remember, except perhaps it was your da. Indeed, Mr. Roger, to see your da, and him riding wast in a red coat, you would think it was the Queen's man,[1] or one of the Saints of God. There was no one I ever seen had the glory on him your da had, unless it was yourself stepping." Roger's da had died of drink there, after a life passed in the preservation of the game laws.

When his baggage arrived, he dressed carefully, and set out up the hill to Ottalie's house, which he could see, even from his cottage, as a white, indeterminate mass, screened by trees from sea-winds. The road branched off into a loaning, hedged with tumbled stone on each side. As he climbed the loaning, the roguish Irish bulls, coming in a gallop, at the sound of his feet, peered down at him, through hedges held together by Providence, or left to the bulls' imagination. A lusty white bull followed him for some time, restrained only by a foot-high wire.

"Indeed," said an old labourer, who, resting by the way, expressed sympathy both for Roger and the bull, "he's only a young bull. He wad do no one anny hurrt, except maybe he felt that way. Let you not trouble, sir."

[1] The late Prince Consort.

Up above Ottalie's house was the garden. The garden wall backed upon the loaning. A little blue door with peeling, blistered paint, let him into the garden, into a long, straight rose-walk, in which the roses had not yet begun to bloom. A sweet-smelling herb grew by the door. He crumpled a leaf of it between his fingers, thinking how wonderful the earth was, which could grow this fragrance, out of mould and rain. The bees were busy among the flowers. The laurustine was giving out sweetness. In the sun of that windless afternoon, the smell thickened the air above the path, making it a warm clot of perfume, to breathe which was to breathe beginning life. Butterflies wavered, keeping low down, in the manner of butterflies near the coast. Birds made musical calls, sudden delightful exclamations, startling laughter, as though the god Pan laughed to himself among the laurustine bushes.

He felt the beauty of the late Irish season as he had never before felt it. It stirred him to the excitement which is beyond poetry, to that delighted sensitiveness, in which the mind, tremulously open, tremulously alive, can neither select nor combine. He longed to be writing poetry; but in the open air the imagination is subordinated to the senses. The lines which formed in his mind were meaningless exclamations. Nature is a setting, merely. The soul of man, which alone, of created things, regards her, is the important thing.

The blinds of the sunny southern front were drawn down; but the marks of carriage wheels upon the drive shewed him that she had returned.

After ringing, he listened for the cracked tinkle far away in the kitchen, and turning, saw a squirrel leap from one beech to another, followed by three or four sparrows. Footsteps shuffled near. Somewhere outside, at the back, an old woman's voice asked whiningly for a bit of bread, for the love of the Almighty God, since she was perished with walking and had a cough on her that would raise pity in a martial man. A younger voice, high, clear, and hard, bidding her whisht, and let her get out of it, ceased suddenly, in her prohibition. The door opened. There was old Mary Laverty, the housekeeper.

"How are you, Mary? Are you quite well?"

"I am, sir. I thank you."

"Is Miss Fawcett in?"

"Have you not heard, sir?"

"Heard what?"

"Miss Ottalah's dead, sir."

"What?"

"She was drowned in the boat that was run into, crossing the sea, two days ago. There was a fog, sir. Did no one tell you, sir?"

"No."

"There was eleven of them drowned, sir."

"Was she . . . Is she lying here?"

"Yes, sir. She's within. The burying will no be till Saturday. She is no chested yet."

"Was Miss Agatha with her?"

"Miss Agatha was not in the cabbon. She was not wetted, indeed. She had not so much as her skirrt wetted, sir. She is within, sir."

"Do you think she would see me?"

"Come in, sir. I will ask."

He stepped in, feeling stunned. His mind gave him an image of something hauled ashore. There was an image of a dripping thing being carried by men up the drive, the gravel crunched under their boots—crunch—crunch in slow time, then a rest at the door, and then, slowly, into the hall, and drip, drip, up the stairs to the darkened bedroom. Then out again, reverently, fumbling their hats, to talk about it with the cook. He did not realize what had happened. Here he was in the room. There was his photograph. There was the Oriental bowl full of potpourri. Ottalie had been drowned. Ottalie was lying upstairs, a dead thing, with neither voice nor movement. Ottalie was dead. She had sat with him in that very room, The old precise sofa was her favourite seat. How could she be dead? She had been in London, asking for him, only two days before. Her letter was in his pocket. There was her music. There was her violin. Why did she not come in, as of old, with her smiling daintiness, and with her hands in great gardening gauntlets clasping tulips for the jars? That beauty was over for the world.

He was stunned by it. He did not know what was happening; but there was Agatha, motioning to him not to get up. He said something about pity. "I pity you." After a minute, he added, "My God!" He was trying to say something to comfort her. The change in her told him that it was all true. It branded it into him. Ottalie was dead, and this was what it meant to the world. This was death, this horror.

His mind groped about like a fainting man for something to clutch. Baudelaire's lines rose up before him. The sentiment of French decadence, with its fancy of ingratitude, made him shudder. A turmoil of quotations seethed and died down in him, "And is old Double dead?" "Come away, death," with a phrase of Arne's setting. A wandering strange phrase of Grieg.

He went up to Agatha and took her hands.

"You poor thing; you poor thing," he repeated. "My God, you poor women suffer!" The clock was ticking all the time. Someone was bringing tea to the next room. The lines in the Persian rug had a horrible regularity. "Agatha," he said. Afterwards he believed that he kissed her, and that she thanked him.

"I don't know. I don't know," she said. "Oh, I'm so very wretched. So wretched. So wretched. And I can't die." She shook in a passion of tears.

"She was wonderful," he said, choking. "She was so beautiful. All she did."

"She was with me a minute before," said Agatha. "We were on deck. She went down to get a wrap. It was so cold in the fog. I had left her wraps in the dining-room. It was my fault."

"Don't say that, Agatha. That's nonsense."

"I never saw her again. It all happened at once. The next instant we were run into. I couldn't see anything. There was a crash, which made us heel right over, and then there was a panic. I didn't know what had happened. I tried to get down to her; but a lot of half-drunk tourists came raving and fighting to get to the boats. I couldn't

get to the doors past them. One of them hit me with his fist and swore at me. The ship was sinking. I nearly got to the door, and then a stewardess cried out that everybody was up from below, and then a great brute of a man flung me into a boat. I hit my head. When I came to, I distinctly felt someone pulling off my rings, and there was a sort of weltering noise where the ship had sunk. One of the tourists cried out: 'Wot-ow! A shipwreck; oh, Polly.' Everybody was shouting all round us, and there was a poor little child crying. I caught at the hand which was taking my rings." Here she stopped. There had been some final humiliation here. She went on after a moment: "The men said that everyone had been saved. I didn't know till we all landed. Nor till after that even. It was so foggy. Then I knew.

"There was a very kind Scotch lady who took me to the hotel. She was very kind. I don't know who she was. The divers came from Belfast during the night. Ottalie was in the saloon. She was wearing her wraps. She must have just put them on. There were five others in the saloon. The inquest was ghastly. One of the witnesses was drunk, and the jury were laughing. The waiter at the hotel knew me. He wired to Leslie, and Leslie hired a motor and came over. Colonel Fawcett is in bed with sciatica. Leslie is arranging everything."

"Is Leslie here?"

"No. Maggie has bronchitis. He had to go back. He'll be here late to-night."

"I might have been with you, Agatha. If I'd stayed in another minute on Tuesday morning, I

should have seen her. I should have travelled with you. It wouldn't have happened. I should have gone for the wraps."

"We saw you at your play, on Monday."

"I didn't know you were in town. Oh, if I had only known!"

"It was my fault that you did not know. I kept back her letter to you. I was jealous. I was wicked. I think the devil was in me."

"Don't think of that now," said Roger gently. He had known it from the first. "Is there anything which I can do, Agatha? Letters to write?"

"There are stacks of letters. They all say the same thing. Oh, I am so wretched, so very wretched!" The shuddering took hold of her. She wept in a shaking tremble which seemed to tear her in pieces.

"Agatha," said Roger, "will you come to Belfast with me? I will hire the motor in the village. I must get some flowers. It would do you good to come."

"No. I must stay. I shall only have her two days more."

He would have asked to look upon Ottalie; but he refrained, in the presence of that passion. Agatha had enough to bear. He would not flick her jealousies. Ottalie was lying just overhead, within a dozen feet of him. Ten minutes ago he had been thinking of her as a lover thinks of his beloved. His heart had been leaping with the thought of her. There she was, in that quiet room, behind the blinds, lying on the bed, still and blank. And where was what had made her so wonderful?

Where was the spirit who had used her as a lodging? She had been all that makes woman wonderful. Beautiful with beauty of mind; a perfect, perfect spirit. And she was dead. She was lying upstairs dead. And here were her two lovers, listening to the clock, listening to the spade-strokes in the garden, where old John was at work. The smell of the potpourri, which she had made the summer before, seemed as strong as incense. The portrait by Raeburn, of her great-grandfather, looked down dispassionately, with eyes that were very like her eyes. The clock had told the time to that old soldier when he went to be painted. It had gone on ticking ever since. It had been ticking when the old soldier died, when his son died, when his grandson died. Now she was dead, and it was ticking still, a solemn old clock, by Frodsham, of Sackville Street, Dublin, 1797, the year before the rising. It would be ticking still, perhaps, when all the hearts then alive would have ceased to tick. There was something pitiless in that steady beat. Three or four generations of Fawcetts had had their lives measured by it, all those beautiful women and noble soldiers. All the "issue" mentioned in Burke.

He went out into the light. All the world seemed melted into emotion, and poured upon him. He was beaten. It poured upon him. He drew it in with his breath. Everything within sight was an agony with memories of her. "I must be doing something," he said aloud. "I must get flowers. I shall wake up presently." He turned at the gate, his mind surging. "Could Agatha be sure that she

is dead? Perhaps I am dead. Or it may be a dream." It was not a dream.

At the bottom of the loaning he met a red-haired man from whom in old time he had bought a boat.

"It's a fine day, sir," said the man.

"John," said Roger, "tell Pat Deloney I want the car, to go to Belfast at once. I shall want him to drive. Tell him to come for me here."

"Indeed, sir," said John, looking at him narrowly. "There's many feeling that way. There was a light on her you'd think it was a saint, and her coming east with brightness."

After John had gone down to the village, there limped up an old, old, half-witted drunken poet, who fiddled at regattas. He saluted Roger, who leaned on a gate, staring uphill towards the house.

"Indeed, Mr. Roger," said the old man; "there's a strong sorrow on the place this day. There was a light burning beyant. I seen the same for her da, and for her da's da. There was them beyant wanted her." He waited for Roger to speak, but getting no answer began to ramble in Irish, and then craved for maybe a sixpence, because "indeed, I knew your da, Mr. Roger. Ah, your da was a grand man, would turn the heads of all the women, and they great queens itself, having the pick of professors and prime ministers and anyone they'd a mind to."

After a time, singing to himself in Irish, he limped on up the loaning to the house, to beg maybe a bit of bread, in exchange for the fact that he had seen a light burning for her, just as he had

seen it for her da, her da's da, and (when the kitchen brandy had arisen in him) her da's da's da years ago.

The car came snorting up the hill, and turned in the broad expanse where the loaning joined the highway. John opened the door for Roger. "If I was a young gentleman and had the right to do it," he said, "I would go in a cyar the like of that cyar down all the craggy precipices of the world." The car shook, spat, and darted. "Will ye go by Tornymoney?" said Pat. "There's no rossers that way."

"By Torneymoney," said Roger. "Drive hard."

"Indeed," said Pat; "we will do great deeds this day. We will make a strong story by the blessing of God. Let you hold tight, your honour. There's holes in this road would give a queer twist to a sea-admiral."

The funeral was on Saturday. About a dozen men came. There were five or six Fawcetts and old Mr. Laramie, who had married Maisie Fawcett, Ottalie's aunt, one of the beauties of her time. The rest were friends from the countryside, Englishmen in faith, education, and feeling. They stood with bared heads in the little lonely Protestant graveyard, as Roman soldiers may have stood by the pyres of their mates in Britain. They were aliens there. They were part of the garrison. They were hiding under the ground something too good and beautiful to belong to that outcast country. Roger had the fancy that God would have to be very strong to hold that outpost. He had not slept for two nights. Sentiments and fancies were over-

whelming him. It was one of those Irish days in which a quality or rarity in the air gives a magic, either alluring or terrible, to every bush and brook and hillock. He had often thought that Ireland was a haunted country. He thought so now, standing by Ottalie's grave. Just beyond the graveyard was the river, which was "bad," and beyond that again a hill. The hill was so "bad," that the beggarwomen, passing in the road, muttering at "the mouldy old Prots, playing at their religion, God save us," crossed themselves as they went by it. Roger prayed that that fair spirit might be at peace, among all this invisible evil. His hand went into his breast pocket from time to time to touch her letter to him. He watched Leslie Fawcett, whose face was so like hers, and old Mr. Laramie, who had won the beauty of her time, and an old uncle Fawcett, who had fought in Africa, sixty years before. The graves of other Fawcetts lay in that corner of the graveyard. He read their names, remembering them from Burke. He read the texts upon the stones. The texts had been put there in agonies of remorse and love and memory by the men and women who played croquet in an old daguerreotype in Ottalie's sitting-room. "He giveth His beloved sleep," and "It is well with the child," and one, a strange one, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all." They had been beautiful and noble, these Fawcetts. Not strong, not clever, but wonderful. They had had a spirit, a spiritual quality, as though for many, many centuries their women had kept themselves unspotted by anything not noble. An instinct for style running

in the race of the Fawcetts for centuries had made them what they were.

A hope burned up in Roger like inspiration. All that instinct for fineness, that fastidious selection of the right and good which had worked to make Ottalie, from long before her birth, and had flowered in her, was surely eternal. She had used life to make her character beautiful and gentle, just as he had used life to discipline his mind to the expression of his imagination. "What's to cōme" was still unsure; but he felt sure, even as the trembling old incumbent reminded them that St. Paul had bidden them not to sorrow, that that devotion was stronger than death. Her spirit might be out in the night, he thought, as in time his would be; but what could assail that devotion? It was a strong thing, it was a holy thing. He was very sure that nothing would overcome it. Like many young men, ignorant of death, he had believed in metempsychosis. This blow of death had brought down that fancy with all the other card-houses of his mind. His nature was now, as it were, humbled to its knees, wondering, stricken, and appalled by possibilities of death undreamed of. He could not feel that Ottalie would live again, in a new body, starting afresh, in a new life-machine, with all the acquired character of the past life as a reserve of strength. He could only feel that somewhere in that great empty air, outside the precise definition of living forms, Ottalie, the little, conquered kingdom of beauty and goodness, existed still. It was something. Newman's hymn, with its lovely closing couplet, moved him and com-

forted him. One of the Fawcetts was crying, snuffling, with a firm mouth, as men usually cry. He himself was near to tears. He was being torn by the thought that Ottalie was lonely, very lonely and frightened, out there beyond life, beyond the order of defined live things.

He walked back with Leslie Fawcett. Agatha's mother was at the house; Leslie was stopping in the cottage with him.

"Poor little Ollie," said Leslie gently.

"She was very beautiful," said Roger. He thought, as he said it, that it was a strange thing for an Englishman to say to a dead woman's brother. "She was very beautiful. It must be terrible to you. You knew her in an intimate relation."

"Yes," said Leslie, looking hard at Roger, out of grave level eyes. "She was a very perfect character."

They were climbing the cliff road to the cottage. The sea was just below them. The water was ruffled to whiteness. Sullivan's jobble stretched in breakers across the bay from Carn Point. Gannets, plunging in the jobble, flung aloft white founts, as though shot were striking.

"You were very great friends," said Roger. "I mean, even for brother and sister."

"Johnny was her favourite brother, as a child," said Leslie. "You did not see much of Johnny. He was killed in the war. And then he was in India a long time. It was after Johnny's death that Ottalie and I began to be so much to each other. You see, Agatha was only with her about five months in the year. She was with us nearly that each year. She was wonderful with children."

"Yes," said Roger, holding open the gate of the little garden so that his guest might pass, "I know." He was not likely to forget how wonderful she had been with children. They went into the little sitting-room where Norah, in one of her black moods, gave them tea. After tea they sat in the garden, looking out over the low hedge at the bay. At sunset they walked along the coast to a place which they had called "the cove." They had used to bathe there. A little brook tumbled over a rock in a forty-foot fall. Below the fall was a pool, overgrown later in the year with meadow-sweet and honeysuckle, but clear now, save for the rushes and brambles. The brook slid out from the basin over a reddish rock worn smooth, even in its veins and knuckles, by many centuries of trickling. Storms had piled shingle below this slide of water. The brook dribbled to the sea unseen, making a gurgling, tinkling noise. Up above, at the place where the fall first leapt, among some ash trees, windy and grey, stood what was left of a nunnery, of reddish stone, fire-blackened, among a company of tumbled gravestones.

Of all the places sacred to Ottalie in Roger's mind, that was the most sacred. They had been happy there. They had talked intimately there, moved by the place's beauty. His most vivid memories of her had that beautiful place for their setting.

"Roger," said Leslie, "did you see her in town, before this happened?"

"No."

"You did not see her?"

"No. Not this time."

"She was going to see you."

"I believe she came just before she started. I had just gone out. We missed each other."

Leslie lifted his pince-nez. He was looking at Roger, with the grave, steady look by which people remembered him. Roger thought afterwards that his putting on of the pince-nez had been done tenderly, as though he had said, "I see that you are suffering. With these glasses I shall see how to help you."

"You were in love with her?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Yes. Who was not?"

"I have something to say to you about that. Have you ever thought of what marriage means? I am not talking of the passionate side. That is nothing. I am talking of the everyday aspect of married life. Have you thought of that at all?"

"All men have thought of it."

"Yes; I grant you. All men have thought of it. But do many of them think it home? Have you? I imagine that most men never follow the thought home; but leave it in day-dreams, and images of selfishness. I don't think that many men realize how infinitely much finer in quality the woman's mind is. Nor how much more delicately quick it is. Nor what the clash of that quickness and fineness, with something duller and grosser, may entail, in ordinary everyday life, to the woman."

"I think that I realize it."

"Yes, perhaps. Perhaps you do realize it, as an intellectual question. But would you, do most

men, realize it as life realizes it? It is one thing to imagine one's duty to one's wife, when, as a bachelor, used to all manner of self-indulgence, one sits smoking over the fire. But to carry out that duty in life taxes the character. Swiftness of responsion, tact, is rarer than genius. I imagine that with you, temporary sensation counts for more than an ordered, and possibly rigid, attitude, towards life as a whole."

"Both count for very much; or did. Nothing seems very much at this moment."

"Ottalie loved you," said Leslie simply. "But she felt that there was this want in you, of so thinking things home that they become character. She thought you too ready to surrender to immediate and, perhaps, wayward emotions. She was not sure that you could help her to be the finest thing possible to her, nor that she could so help you."

"How do you know this?"

"She discussed it with me. She wanted my help. I said that I ought not to interfere, but that, on the whole, I thought that she was right. That, in fact, your love was not in the depths of your nature. I said this; but I added that you were too sensitive to impressions not to grow, and that (rightly influenced) there is hardly anything which you might not become. The danger which threatens you seems to me to threaten all artists. Art is a great strain. It compels selfishness. I have wondered whether, if things had been different, if you had married Ottalie, you could have come from creating heroines to tend a wife's headache; or, with a headache yourself, have seen the heroine

in her. We have life before us. You are all tenderness and nobleness now. It is sad that we have not this always in our minds."

"Yes," said Roger. "We have life; and all my old life is a house of cards. Before this it seemed a noble thing to strive with my whole strength to express certain principles, and to give reality and beauty to imagined character. I worked to please her. And often I did not understand her, and did not know her. I have walked in her mind, and the houses were all shut up. I could only knock at the doors and listen. And now I never shall know. I only know that she was a very beautiful thing, and that I loved her, and tried to make my work worthy of her."

"She loved you, too," said Leslie. "Whatever death may be, we ought to look upon it as a part of life. Try to be all that you might have been with her. Never mind about your work. You have been too fond of emotional self-indulgence. Set that aside, and go on. She would have married you. Try to realize that. Her nature would have been a part of yours. All your character would have been sifted and tested and refined by her. Now let us go in, Roger. Tell me what you are going to do."

"There is not much to do. I must try to rearrange my life. But I see one thing, I think, that art is very frightful when it has not the seriousness of life and death in it."

"Yes," said Leslie. "Maggie and I went into that together. We built up a theory that the art life is strangely like the life of the religious con-

templative. Both attract men by the gratification of emotion as well as by the possibility of perfection. One of the great Spanish saints, I think it is St. John of Avila, says that many novices deliberately indulge themselves in religious emotion, for the sake of the emotion, instead of for the love of God; but that the knowledge of God is only revealed to those who get beyond that stage, and can endure stages of 'stypticities and drynesses,' with the same fervour. It seems to us (of course we are both Philistines) that modern art does not take enough out of those who produce it. The world flatters them too much. I suspect that flattery of the world is going on in return."

"Not from the best."

Leslie shook his head unconvinced. "You are not producing martyrs," he said. "You do not attack bad things. You laugh at them, or photograph them, and call it satire. You belong to the world, my friend Roger. You are a part of the vanity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. You have not even made the idea of woman glorious in men's minds. Otherwise they would have votes and power in the Houses. Not one of you has even been imprisoned for maiming a censor of plays. All the generations have a certain amount of truth revealed to them. It is very dangerous to discover truth. You can learn what kind of truth is being revealed to an age by noting what kind of people give their lives for ideas. It used at one time to be bishops. Think of it."

Leslie talked on, shaping the talk as he had planned it beforehand, but pointing it so gently that it

was not till afterwards that Roger, realizing his motives, gave him thanks for his unselfishness. They stopped on the rushy hill below Ottalie's home, just as the sun, now sinking, flamed out upon her window, till it burned like the sun itself. To Roger it seemed like a flaming door. She had looked out there, from that window. Her little writing-table, with its jar of sweet peas, and that other jar, of autumn berries and the silvery parchment of honesty, stood just below it, on each side of the blotter, bound in mottled chintz. Leslie's talk came home to him fiercely. The clawings of remorse came. He knew the room. He had never known the inmate. She was gone. He had wasted his chance. He might have known her; but he had preferred to indulge in those emotions and sentiments which keep the soul from knowledge. Now she was gone. All the agony of remorse cried out in him for one little moment in the room with her, to tell her that he loved her, for one little word of farewell, one sight of the beloved face, so that he might remember it for ever. Memories rose up, choking him. She was gone. There was only the flaming door.

"Roger," said Leslie, in his even, gentle voice, which had such a quality of attraction in it, "Maggie asked me to bring you back with me to stay a couple of weeks."

In his confused sleep that night he dreamed that Ottalie was lying ill in her room, behind a bolted copper door which gleamed. The passage without the room was lighted. People came to the door

to knock. A long procession of people came. He saw them listening intently there, with their ears bent to the keyhole. They were all the people who had been in love with her. Some were relatives, some were men who had seen her at dances, some were women, some were old friends like himself. Last of all came an elderly lady carrying a light. She was dressed in a robe of dim purple. She, too, knocked sharply on the door. She lingered there, long enough for him to study her fine, intellectual face. It was the face of Ottalie grown old. The woman was the completed Ottalie.

For a moment she stood there listening, as one listens at the door of a sick-room. Then she knocked a second time, sharply, calling "Ottalie!" He saw then that it was not a door but a flame. He heard from within a strangled answer, as though someone, half dead, had risen to open. Someone was coming to the door. Even in his dream his blood leaped with the expectation of his love.

But it was not his love. It was himself, strangling in the flames to get to her. She reached her hand to him. Though the flames were stifling, he touched her. It was as though the agony of many years had been changed suddenly to ecstasy. "Roger," she said. Her hand caught him, she drew him through the fire to her. He saw her raise the candle to look at his face. For a moment they were looking at each other, there in the passage. The agony was over. They were together, looking into each other's eyes. He felt her life coursing into him from her touch.

Voices spoke without. Norah, at the door, was

haggling. "Is that all the milk ye've brought, Kitty O'Hara?"

The dream faded away as the life broke in upon him. There was some word, some song. Someone with a fine voice was singing outside, singing in the dream, singing about a fever. Ottalie was holding him, but her touch was fading from his sense, and joy was rushing from him. Outside, on the top spray of the blackthorn, a yellow-hammer trilled, "A little bit of bread and no—che-e-e-e-se," telling him that the world was going on.

The fortnight passed. Roger was going back to London. The day before he sailed he rode over with Leslie to take a last look at Ottalie's home. He left Leslie at the cottage, so that he might go there alone. He walked alone up the loaning. Within the garden he paused, looking down at the house. The smell of the sweet verbena was very strong, in that mild damp air, full of the promise of rain. A paper was blowing about along the walk. A white kitten, romping out from the stable, pounced on it, worried it with swift gougings of the hind claws, then, spitting, with ears laid back and tail bristling, raced away for a swift climb up a pear-tree. Roger picked up the paper. It would be a relic of the place. He felt inclined to treasure everything there, to take the house, never to go away from it, or, failing that, to carry away many of her favourite flowers. He straightened the paper so that he might read it.

It was a double page from a year-old London paper entitled *Top-Knots*. It consisted of scraps of gossip, scraps of news, scraps of information,

seasoned with imperial feeling. It had been edited by someone with a sense of the purity of the home. It was harmless stuff. The wisdom of the reader was flattered; the wisdom of the foreigner was not openly condemned. Though some fear of invasion was implied, its possibility was flouted. "It was a maxim of our Nelson that one Englishman was worth three foreigners." The jokes were feeble. The paper catered for a class of poor, half-educated people without more leisure than the morning ride to business, and the hour of exhaustion between supper and bed. It was well enough in its way. Some day, when life is less exhausting, men will demand stuff with more life. Something caught Roger's eye. He read it through. It was the first thing read by him since his arrival there.

"SLEEPING SICKNESS.

"It is not generally known that this devasting ailment is caused by the presence of a minute micro-organism in the human system. The micro-organism may exist in unsuspected harmlessness for many years in the victim's blood. It is not until it enters what is known to scientists as the cerebro-spinal fluid, or as we should call it, the marrow, that it sets up the peculiar symptoms of the dread disease which has so far baffled the ingenuity of our *soi-disant* savants. This terrible affliction, which is not by any means confined to those inferior members of the human race, the dusky inhabitants of Uganda, consists of a lethargy accompanied with great variations of temperature.

So far the dread complaint is without a remedy. Well may the medico echo the words of the Prince of Denmark:

> 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamed of in your philosophy.'"

There was no more about the disease. The page ended with a joke about a mother-in-law. The paragraph made Roger remember an article which he had once read about the sudden rise of the sickness in some district in Africa. He remembered the photograph of a young African, who was dozing his life away, propped against a tree. The thought passed. In another instant he was full of his own misery again. But instead of throwing away the paper, he folded it, and put it in his pocket-case. It would remind him of that last visit to Ottalie's garden. He would keep it for ever.

His wretchedness gave him a craving to be tender to something. He tried to attract the kitten, but the kitten, tiring of her romp, scampered to the garden wall to stalk sparrows. He plucked a leaf or two from the verbena. He went into the house.

Agatha welcomed him. She was writing replies to letters of condolence. The death had taken her hardness from her.

"Sit down and talk," she said. "What are you going to do?"

"That is like a woman," he said. "Women are wonderful. They use a man's vanity to protect themselves from his egotism. I came here to ask you that. What are you going to do?"

"I shall go on with my work," she said. "I am sure not to marry. I shall start a little school for poor girls."

"At Great Harley? But you were doing that before."

"Only in a very desultory sort of way. But now it is all different. Life has become so much bigger."

"Will you tell me about it? I should like to hear about it."

"Oh, it would only bore you. I shall just teach them the simplest things. How to darn clothes, how to cook, and perhaps a little singing. It isn't as though I were a learned person."

"How kind of you."

"It isn't kind at all."

"You will be taking girls of from thirteen to sixteen?"

"Yes. I've got no *flair* for very little children. Besides, there is nothing which I could teach them. I want to get hold of them at an age when I can really be of use to them."

She drummed a little with one foot.

"I wish that you would let me help you," he continued.

"Thank you very much. That is very kind of you. But I must do this quite by myself."

"What are you going to do with the flat in town?" he asked. "I should like to take it if you are going to give it up."

"Oh, I shall keep it on," she said. "I shall be up for week-ends a good deal, at any rate until I have got my class in working order."

"You will let me know if you ever want to give it up?"

"Yes. Certainly I will. Will you go back? I suppose you will be going back to your work. What are your plans? You never answered my question. You went flying off into apophthegms."

"I loved Ottalie, too," he answered. "I won't say as much as you did, for you knew her intimately. I never was soul to soul with her as you were; but I loved her. I want now to make my life worthy of her, as you do. But it won't be in my work. I don't know what it will be in. You women are lucky. You can know people like her."

"Yes. I shall always be glad of that," said Agatha. "Even the loss is bearable when I think that I knew her fully. Perhaps better than anyone."

"Yes," he said. He paused, turning it over in his mind. "Life is a conspiracy against women," he added. "That is why they are so wonderful and so strange. I am only groping in the dark about her."

"Roger," said Agatha, speaking slowly, "I think I ought to tell you. I knew that you were in love with her. I was jealous of you. I did all that I could to keep you apart. She was in love with you. When she saw you at the theatre before the disturbance began, she would have gone to your box if I had not said that I was sure you would prefer to be alone. In the morning she saw what one of the papers said. She insisted on going to see you at your rooms. She said that she was sure you were

expecting her, or that something had kept her letters from you. I told her that it wasn't a very usual thing to do. She said that she would talk about that afterwards. Afterwards, when she had gone, and failed to see you, she was horrified at what you might think of her."

It was very sweet to hear more of her, thus, after all was over. It was something new about her. He had never seen that side of her. He wondered how much more Agatha would tell him, or permit him to learn, in years to come. He saw that she was near tears. He was not going to keep her longer on the rack.

"Agatha," he said, "we have been at cross-purposes for a long time now. We have not been just to each other. Let it end now. We both loved her. Don't let it go on, now that she is dead. I want to feel that the one who knew her best is my friend. I want you to let me help you, as a brother might, whenever you want help. Will you?"

She said, "Thank you, Roger." They shook hands. He remembered afterwards how the lustre of the honesty shewed behind her head. A worn old panther skin, the relic of a beast which had been shot in India by Ottalie's father so many years before that the hairless hide was like parchment beneath the feet, crackled as she left the room. Roger plucked some of the silvery seed vessels for remembrance.

He stood in the hall for a moment trying to fix it in his mind. There was the barometer, by Dakins, of South Castle Street, in Liverpool, an old piece, handsome, but long since useless. There

were the well-remembered doors. The dining-room door, the library door, the door leading into the jolly south room, the room sweet with the vague perfume, almost the memory of a perfume, as though the ghosts of flowers strayed there. The door of that room was open. Through its open windows he could see the blue of the bay, twinkling to the wind. Near the window was the piano, heaped with music. A waltz lay upon the piano: the *Myosotis* Waltz. Let no one despise dance music. It is the music which breaks the heart. It is full of lights and scents, the laughter of pretty women and youth's triumph. To the man or woman who has failed in life the sound of such music is bitter. It is youth reproaching age. It indicates the anti-climax.

He walked with Leslie through the village. The ragged men on the bridge, hearing them coming, turned, and touched what had once been their hats to them. They were not made for death, those old men. They were the only Irish things which the English tourist had not corrupted. They leant on the parapet all day. In the forenoons they looked at the road and at the people passing. In the afternoons, when the sun made their old eyes blink, they turned and looked into the water, where it gurgled over rusty cans, a clear brown peat-stream. A quarter of a mile up the stream was the graveyard, where the earth had by this time ceased to settle over Ottalie's face. On the grave, loosely tied with rushes, was a bunch of dog-roses.

They climbed the sharp rise beyond the bridge. Here they began to ride. They were going to ride

thirty miles to the hotel. There they would sleep. In the morning Roger would take the steamer and return to London, where he would dree his weird by his lane as best he could.

The men on the quay were loading ore, as of old, into a dirty Glasgow coaster. One of them asked Roger which team had won at the hurling.

They ploughed through the red mud churned by the ore-carts. The schooner lay bilged on the sand, as of old, with one forlorn rope flogging the air. One or two golfers loafed with their attendant loafers on the links. They rode past them. Then on the long, straight, eastward bearing road, which rounds Carn Point, they began to hurry, having the wind from the glens behind them. Soon they were at the last gloomy angle from which the familiar hills could be seen. They rounded it. They passed the little turnpike. A cutter yacht, standing close inshore, bowed slowly under all sail before them. She lifted, poising, as the helm went down. Her sails trembled into a great rippling shaking, then steadied suddenly as the sheet checked. A man aboard her waved his hand to them, calling something. They spun downhill from the cutter. Now they were passing by a shore where the water broke on weed-covered boulders. From that point the road became more ugly at each turn of the wheel. It was the road to England.

They stopped at the posting-house so that a puncture might be mended while they were at tea. Tea was served in a long, damp, decaying room, hung with shabby stuff curtains. Vividly coloured portraits of Queen Victoria and Robert Emmet

hung from the walls. On the sideboard were many metal teapots. On the table, copies of *Commerce*, each surmounted by a time-table in a hard red cover, surrounded a tray of pink wineglasses grouped about an aspodesta. On a piano was a pile of magazines, some of them ten years old, all coverless and dog's-eared. Roger picked up one of the newest of them, not because he wanted to read it, but because, like many literary men, he was unable to keep his hands off printed matter. He answered Leslie at random as he looked through it. There was not much to interest him there. Towards the end of it there was a photograph of an African hut, against which a man and woman huddled, apparently asleep. A white man in tropical clothes stood beside them, looking at something in a sort of test-tube.

"A COMMON SCENE IN THE SLEEPING SICKNESS BELT," ran the legend. Underneath, in smaller type, was written, "This photograph represents two natives in the last stages of the dread disease, which, at present, is believed to be incurable. The man in white, to l. of the picture (reader's r.), is Dr. Wanklyn, of the Un. Kgdm. Med. Assn. The photograph was taken by Mr. A. S. Smallpiece, Dr. Wanklyn's assistant. Copyright."

"What do you know of sleeping sickness, Leslie?" he asked.

"Sleeping sickness?" said Leslie. "There was an article about it in *The Fortnightly*, or one of the reviews. There was a theory that it is caused in some way by the bite of a tsetse fly."

"Yes," said Roger. "I remember that."

"Then when Maggie and I were staying at Drumnalorry we met old Dr. MacKenzie. He was out in Africa a great deal, fifty or sixty years ago. He was a great friend of my mother's. He told us at dinner one night that sleeping sickness is not a new thing at all, but a very old thing. The natives used to get it even in his day. He said that the tsetse fly theory was really all nonsense. He called it a pure invention, based on the discovery that yellow fever is spread by the white-ribbed mosquito. His own theory was that it was caused by manioc intoxication."

"That seems to me to be the prejudice of an old man. What is manioc?"

"A kind of a root, like cassava, isn't it?"

"Probably. What is cassava?"

"It's what they make bread of; cassava bread. It's poisonous until you bake it. Isn't that the stuff? Are you interested in sleeping sickness?"

"Yes. It has been running in my head all day. Look here. Here's a picture of two Africans suffering from it. Do they just sleep away like that?"

"I suppose so. They become more and more lethargic, probably, until at last they cannot be roused."

"How long are they in that condition?"

"I believe for weeks. Poor fellows; it must be ghastly to watch."

"There is no cure. There's no cure for a lot of things. Tetanus, leprosy, cancer. I wonder how it begins. You wake up feeling drowsy. And then to feel it coming on; and to have seen others ill with it. And to know at the beginning what you

will have to go through and become. It must be ghastly."

"Here is tea," said Leslie. "By the way, sleeping sickness must be getting worse. It attacks Europeans sometimes. Mackenzie said that in his time it never did."

"Well," said Roger, "Europeans have given enough diseases to the Africans. It is only fair that we should take some in return."

They rode on slowly in the bright Irish twilight. When they were near the end of their journey they came to a villa, the garden of which was shut from the road by a low hedge. The garden was full of people. Some of them were still playing croquet. Chinese lanterns, already lit, made mellow colour in the dusk. A black-haired, moustachioed man with a banjo sat in a deck-chair singing. The voice was a fine bass voice, somehow familiar to Roger. It was wailing out the end of a sentimental ditty:

"O, the moon, the moon, the moon,"

in which the expression had to supply the want of intensity in the writing. Hardly had the singer whined his last note when he twanged his banjo thrice in a sprightly fashion. He piped up another ditty just as the cyclists passed.

"O, I'm so seedy,
So very seedy,
I don't know what to do.
I've consumption of the liver
And a dose of yellow fever
And sleeping sickness, too.
O, my head aches
And my heart . . . "

The banjo came to ground with a twang: the song stopped.

"Fawcett!" the singer shouted; "Fawcett! Come in here. Where are you going?"

"I can't stop," cried Leslie, over his shoulder. He turned to Roger. "Let's get away," he said.

They rode hard for a few minutes. "Who was that?" Roger asked. "I seemed to know his voice."

"It's a man called Maynwaring," said Leslie. "I don't think you've met him, have you? He's in the Navy. He met us at a dance. He proposed to Ottalie about a year ago. Now he has married one of those pretty, silly doll-women, a regular officer's wife. They are not much liked here."

"Curious," said Roger; "he was singing about sleeping sickness. Somehow, I think I must have met him. His voice seems so familiar." He stopped suddenly, thinking that the voice was the voice of the singer in his dream. "Yes," he said to himself. "Yes. It was."

A few minutes later they were sliding down the long hill to the hotel.

VI

Man is a lump of earth, the best man's spiritless,
To such a woman.

John Fletcher.

LONDON was too full of memories. He could not get away from them. He could not empty his mind sufficiently to plan or execute new work. He was too near to his misery. He had been in town, now, for a month; but he had done nothing. He was engaged daily in trying to realize that his old life had stopped. If he thought at all he thought as those stunned by grief always will, in passages of poignant feeling. His nights were often sleepless. When he slept he often dreamed that he was alone in the night, looking into a lit room where Ottalie stood, half-defined, under heavy robes. Then he would wake with a start to realize that he would never see any trace of her again, beyond the few relics which he possessed.

Only one little ray of light gave him hope. He wanted to rebuild his life for her. He wanted to become all that she would have liked him to become. In any case, whatever happened, he would have the memory of her to guide him in all that he did. But he felt, every now and then, when he could feel at all hopefully, that she was trying to help him to become what she had longed for him to be. He thought that little chance happenings in life

were signals from her in the other world, or, if not signals, attempts to move him, attempts to make him turn to her; things full of significance if only he could interpret them. He felt that in some way she was trying to communicate. It was as though the telephone had broken. It was as though the speaker could not say her message directly; but had to say it in fragments to erring, forgetful, wayward messengers, who forgot and lost their sequence. They could only hint, stammeringly, at the secret revealed to them. He thought that she had sent him some message about sleeping sickness, using the torn page, the magazine, and the naval officer, as her messengers. There were those three little words from her, romantic, like words heard in dream. If they were not from her, then they were none the less holy, they were intimately bound with his last memories of her. Often he would cry out in his misery that she might be granted to come to him in dream to complete her message. What did she want to say about sleeping sickness?

He could not guess. He could only say to himself that for some hidden reason that disease had been brought to his notice at a time when he was morbidly sensitive to impressions. He spent many hours in the British Museum studying that disease as closely as one not trained to medical research could hope to do. He read the Reports of the Commission, various papers in *The Lancet*, the works of Professor Ronald Ross and Sir Patrick Manson, the summary of Low in Allbutt, the deeply interesting articles in the *Journal of Tropical Medicine*,

and whatever articles he could find in reviews and encyclopædias.

He called one day at the theatre office in answer to a telegram from Falempin. Falempin had something to say to him. He had flung down the glove to the "peegs," he said, by keeping on *The Roman Matron* for the usual weekly eight performances, in spite of the Press and the public wrath. For three weeks he had played it to empty or abusive houses. Then, at the end of the third week, a man had written in a monthly review that *The Roman Matron* was the only play of the year, and that all other English plays then running in London were so many symptoms of our national rottenness. The writer was not really moved by *The Roman Matron.* He was a town wit, trying to irritate the public by praising what it disliked, and by finding a moral death in all that it approved. It may be said of such that they cast bread upon the waters; but the genius, as a rule, does not find it until many days. In this case, as the wit was at the moment the fashion, his article was effectual from the day of its publication. The actors found one evening an attentive, not quite empty house. Three nights later the piece went very well indeed. On the fourth night they were called. By the end of the week *The Roman Matron* was a success, playing to a full house.

"Naldrett," said Falempin, "I 'ave lost twelve thousand pounds over your play. What so? I go to make perhaps forty thousand. Always back your cards. The peegs they will eat whatever they are told. Some of the papers they are eating their

words. You see ? Here ; here is anozzer. By the same men, I think. Criticism ? Next to the peegs, I do lof the critic. It likes not me, these funny men. What is the English people coming to ? You 'ave critics ; you 'ave very fine critics. But they 'ave no power. Zese men in zese gutter rags—— Pah. We go to make you many motor-cars out of zis play."

Leslie brought his wife to town a week later. She wished to consult an oculist. Roger dined with them the night after their arrival.

" Roger," said Leslie, " I want you to meet my cousin, Mrs. Heseltine. She wants you to dine with her to-morrow night. We said that we would bring you if you were free. I hope that you will come ; she's such a splendid person."

Roger said that he would go.

That evening he went to an At Home given in honour of a great French poet who was staying in London. He had no wish to attend the function. He went from a sense of duty. He went from a sense of what was due to the guardian of intellect. The At Home was in Kensington, in a big and hideous house. A line of carriages stood by the kerb, each with its tortured horses tossing their heads piteously against the bearing-reins. Flunkeys with white, sensual faces stood at the door. There was a glitter of varnish everywhere, from boots, carriages, and polished metal. There was not much noise, except the champ-champing of the bits and the spattering of foam. Carriage doors slammed from time to time. Loafers insulted those who entered. Women and children, standing by the

strip of baize upon the sidewalk, muttered in awed hatred.

Roger went into a room jammed with jabberers. In the middle of the room there was a kind of circle, a sort of pugilists' ring, in which the poet stood. He was a little stocky man, powerfully built. He had a great head, poised back on his shoulders so that his jaw protruded aggressively. It needed only one glance to see that he was the one vital person in the room. The big, beefy, successful English novelists looked like bladders beside him. He talked in a voice which boomed and rang. People crowded up. Ladies in wonderful frocks broke on him, as it were, in successions of waves. He bowed, he was shaken by the hand, he was pulled by the arm. Questions and compliments and platitudes came upon him in every known variety of indifferent French. He never ceased to talk. He could have talked the room to a standstill, and gone on fresh to a dozen like it. He was talking wisely, too. Roger heard half of one booming epigram as he caught his hostess' eye. She was bringing up relays of platitudes to take the place of those already exploded. His host, sawing the air with one hand, was expounding something which he couldn't explain. Roger saw him compliment the poet for taking his point without exposition. Exploded platitudes ran into Roger and apologized. Roger ran into platitudes not yet exploded and apologized. There was a gabble everywhere of unintelligent talk, dominating but not silencing the great voice. Roger heard an elegant young man speak of the poet as "a bounder, an awful bounder." Then

somebody took him by the arm. Somebody wanted to talk to him. He said his say to the great man while being dragged to somebody. Somebody in a strange kind of chiton below a strange old gold Greek necklace was telling him about *The Roman Matron.* Did he write it ?

" Yes," he said. " I wrote it."

The hostess interposed. The chiton was borne off to a lady in Early Victorian dress. A little grey man, very erect and wiry, like a colonel on the stage, bumped into Roger.

" Rather a crowd, eh ? " he said, as he apologized. " Have you seen my wife anywhere ? "

" No," said Roger. " Is she here ? "

" Yes," said the other. " I believe she is. Awfully well the old fellow looks, doesn't he ? I met him in Paris in 1890."

They talked animatedly for ten minutes about the prospects of French literature as compared with our own. Presently the little man caught sight of his wife. He nodded to Roger and passed on. Roger could not remember that he had ever seen him before.

He looked about for someone with whom to talk. A couple of novelists stood on the opposite side of the room talking to a girl. There was not much chance of getting to them. He looked to his left hand, where some of the waste of the party had been drifted by the tide. He did not know any of the people there. He was struck by the appearance of a young man who stood near the wall, watching the scene with an interest which was half contemptuous. The man was, perhaps, thirty years of

age. What struck Roger about him was the strange yellowness of his face. The face looked as though it had been varnished with a clear amber varnish. The skin near the eyes was puckered into crows' feet. The brow was wrinkled and seamed. The rest of the face had the leanness and tightness of one who has lived much in unhealthy parts of the tropics. He was a big man, though as lean as a rake. Roger judged from his bearing that he had been a soldier; yet there was a touch of the doctor about him, too. His eyes had the direct questioning look of one always alert to note small symptoms, and to find the truth of facts through evasions and deceits. His hands were large, capable, clinical hands, with long, supple, sensitive fingers, broad at the tips. The mouth was good-humoured, but marred by the scar of a cut at the left corner.

Presently the man walked up to Roger with the inimitable easy grace which is in the movements of men who live much in the open.

"Excuse me," he said; "but who is the poet in the middle there?"

"Jerome Mongeron," said Roger.

"Thanks," said the man, retiring.

Roger noticed that the man's eyes were more bloodshot than any eyes he had ever seen. Soon after that Roger saw him lead an elderly lady, evidently his mother, out of the room. As he felt that he had bored himself sufficiently in homage to the man of intellect, he too slipped away as soon as he could.

The night following he dined with Mrs. Heseltine. She was an elderly lady, fragile-looking, but

very beautiful, with that autumnal beauty which comes with the beginning greyness of the hair. Her face had the fineness of race in it. Looking at her, one saw that all the unwanted, unlovely elements had been bred away, by conscious selection, in many generations of Fawcetts. Her face had that simple refinement of feature which one sees in the women's faces in Holbein's drawing of Sir Thomas More's family. Only in Mrs. Heseltine the striving for rightness and fineness had been pushed a little too far at the expense of the bodily structure. There was a pathetic drooping of the mouth's corners, and a wild-bird look in the eye which told of physical weakness very bravely borne. Her husband was a brain specialist.

She wore black for her niece. There were few other guests. It was a family party. There were the two Heseltines, their cousins the Luscombes, the two Fawcetts, Ethel Fawcett (another cousin), a woman in morning dress who had just been speaking at a suffrage meeting, Roger, and one Lionel who was very late. They waited for Lionel. They were sure that Lionel would not be long. The suffrage speaker, Miss Lenning, asked if Lionel were better. Yes. The new treatment was doing him good. They were hoping that he would get over it. Roger started when Mrs. Heseltine's voice grew grave. There were notes in it strangely like Ottalie's voice. The voice reveals character more clearly than the face, more clearly than it reveals character, it reveals spiritual power. Until he heard those grave notes he had not seen much of Ottalie in her, except in the way in which she sat, the head a little

drooped, the hands composed, in a pose which no art could quite describe, it was so like her. The words thrilled through him, as though the dead were in the room under a disguise. There was Leslie looking at him, with grave, kindly deliberation, putting up his glasses to Ottalie's eyes with Ottalie's hand. Ottalie's voice spoke to him through Mrs. Heseltine. They were away in one corner of the room now, looking at a drawing.

"I have so often heard of you," she was saying. "Somehow I always missed you when I was at Portobe. But I have heard of you from Leslie, and from poor Ottalie. I wanted to see you. I have been waiting to see you for the last month. I wanted to tell you something which Ottalie said to me, when my boy was killed in the war. She said that when a life ended, like that, suddenly and incomplete, it was our task to complete it, for the world's sake, in our own lives." She paused for an instant, and then added: "I have tried to realize what my boy would have done. I hope that you will come to talk to me whenever you like. Ottalie was very dear to me. She was in this room, looking at this drawing, only seven weeks ago." She faltered for a moment.

"Yes, Mrs. Heseltine?" he said.

"Talking about you," she added gently.

"Mr. Heseltine," said the maid, opening the door. The man with the yellow face and injected eyes entered.

"Ah, Lionel," said Mrs. Heseltine.

"I'm awfully sorry I'm so late," he said. "They've been trying a new cure on me. It's said to be per-

manent; but they've only tried it on one other fellow so far. I wish you hadn't waited for me." He glanced at Roger with a smile.

"D'you know Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Naldrett?"

"We met each other last night," said Roger. "At the MacElherans'."

"Yes. I think we did," he answered.

Dinner was announced. Roger took Miss Lenning. Mrs. Heseltine sat at his left. Miss Lenning was a determined young woman with no nonsense about her. Roger asked if her speech had gone well.

"Pretty well," she said. "I was on a wagon in the Park. A lot of loafers rushed the wagon once or twice. It's the sort of thing London loafers delight to do."

"Yes," said Roger. "That is because the part of London near the parks is not serious. It is a part given up to pleasure-mongers and their parasites. The crowds there don't believe in anything, they won't help anything, they can't understand anything. In the East of London you would probably get attention. I suppose the police sniggered and looked away?"

"You talk as though you had been at it yourself," said Miss Lenning.

"Been at it? Yes. Of course I have. But not very much, I'm afraid. I used to speak fairly regularly. Then at your big meeting in the Park I got a rotten egg in the jaw, which gave me blood poisoning. I had to stop then, because ever since then I've been behindhand with my work. A London crowd is a crowd of loafers loafing. But a crowd in a northern city, in Manchester, or Leeds,

or Glasgow, is a very different thing. They are a different stock. They are working men, interested in things. Here they are idlers delighting in a chance of rowdyism. They are without chivalry or decent feeling. They go to boo and jeer, knowing that the police won't stop them. I think you women are perfectly splendid to do what you do, and have done."

"Oh, one doesn't mind going to prison," said Miss Lenning. "I've been three times now. Besides, we shall know how to reform the prisons when we get the vote. What makes my blood boil are the insults I get in the streets from the sort of men whose votes are responsible for disgraces like the war." She stopped. "What is your line?" she asked.

"I'm a writer."

"Why don't you write a play or a novel about us?"

"Because I don't believe in mixing art with propaganda. My province is to induce emotion. I am not going to use such talent as I have upon intellectual puzzles proper to this time. That is the work of a reformer or a leader-writer. My work is to find out certain general truths in nature, and to express them, in prose or verse, in as high and living a manner as I can. That seems absurd to you?"

"Not absurd exactly," she said, "but selfish."

"You think, then, that a man who passes his life in trying to make the world's thought nobler, and the world's character thereby finer, must necessarily be selfish?"

"Yes; I do," she said firmly. "There are all you writers trying, as you put it, to make the world's thought noble, and not one of you—I beg your pardon, only three of you—lift a finger to help us get the vote. You don't really care a rush about the world's thought. You care only for your own thought."

"And your own thought isn't thought at all," said Major Luscombe from over the table. "I don't mean yours, personally, of course. I like your play very much. But taking writers generally throughout the world, what does the literary mind contribute to the world's thought now? Can you point to any one writer, anywhere in the world, whose thoughts about the world are really worth reading?"

"Yes. To a good many. In a good many countries," said Roger.

"I have no quarrel with art," said Heseltine, taking up the cudgels. "It is moral occupation. But I feel this about modern artists, that, with a few exceptions, they throw down no roots, either into national or private life. They care no more for the State, in its religious sense, than they care (as, say, an Elizabethan would have cared) for conduct. They seem to me to be a company of men without any common principle or joint enthusiasm, working, rather blindly and narrowly, at the bidding of personal idiosyncrasy, or of some aberration of taste. A few of you, some of the most determined, are interested in social reform. The rest of you are merely photographing what goes on for the amusement of those who cannot photograph."

"Yes," said Roger. "At present you are condemning modern society. When you were a boy, Dr. Heseltine, you lived in an ordered world, which was governed by supernatural religion, excited by many material discoveries, and kept from outward anxiety by prosperity and peace. All that world has been turned topsy-turvy in one generation. We are no longer an ordered world. I believe there is a kind of bacillus, isn't there, which, when exposed to the open air, away from its home in the blood, flies about wildly in all directions? That is what we are doing. A large proportion of English people, having lost faith in their old ruler, supernatural religion, fly about wildly in motor-cars. And, unfortunately, material prosperity has increased enormously while moral discipline has been declining; so that now, while we are, perhaps, at the height of our national prosperity, there is practically no common enthusiasm binding man to man, spirit to spirit. It is difficult for an artist to do much more than to reflect the moral conduct of his time, and to cleanse, as it were, what is eternal in conduct from its temporary setting. If the world maintains, as I hold that it does, that there is nothing eternal, and that moral conduct consists in going a great deal, very swiftly, in many very expensive motor-cars, with as many idle companions as possible, then I maintain that you must respect the artist for standing alone and working, as you put it, 'rather blindly and narrowly,' at whatever protest his personal idiosyncrasy urges him to make."

"That's just what I was saying," said Major Luscombe. "I was dining with Sir Herbert Chard

last night, down at Aldershot. We were talking military shop rather. About conscription. I said that I thought it was a great pity that universal discipline of some kind had not been substituted for the old moral discipline, which of course we all remember, and I dare say were the last to get. You can't get on without discipline."

"Ah, but that is preaching militarism," said Mrs. Heseltine; "and preaching it insidiously."

"The military virtues are the bed-rock of character," said the Major.

"I cannot believe that character is taught by drill-sergeants and subalterns," said Mrs. Heseltine. "If it is taught at all, it is taught (perhaps unconsciously) by fine men and women; and to some extent by the images of noble character in works of art. I see no chance of moral regeneration in conscription, only another excuse for vapouring, and for that kind of casting off of judgment and responsibility which goes under the name of patriotism."

"I would rather establish a compulsory study of Equity," said Roger. "Then nations might judge a *casus belli* justly, on its merits, instead of accepting the words of newspapers inspired by unscrupulous usurers, as at present. A few unprincipled men, mostly of the lowest kind of commercial Jew, are able to run this country into war whenever they like. And the Briton believes himself to be a level-headed business man."

"If that is the case," said the Major triumphantly, "it proves my point. If we are likely to go to war, we ought to be prepared for war. And we

can only be prepared if we establish conscription. And if we are not prepared, we shall cease as a nation. It is your duty, as an English writer, to awaken the national conscience by a play or novel, so that when the time comes we may be prepared."

"My duty is nothing of the kind," said Roger. "I believe war to be a wasteful curse; and the preparation for war to be an even greater curse, and infinitely more wasteful. I am not a patriot, remember. My State is mind. The human mind. I owe allegiance to that first. I am not going to set Time's clock back by preaching war. War belongs to savages and to obsolete anachronisms like generals. You think that that is decadence. That I am a weak, spiritless, little-Englander, who will be swept away by the first 'still, strong man' who comes along with 'a mailed fist.' Very well. I have no doubt that brute force can and will sweep away most things not brutal like itself. It may sweep me away. But I will not disgrace my century by preaching the methods of Palæolithic man. If you want war, go out and fight waste. I suppose that two hundred and fifty million pounds are flung away each year on drink and armaments in this country alone. I suppose that in the same time about five hundred pounds are spent on researches into the causes of disease. About the same amount is given away to reward intellectual labours. I mean labours not connected with the improvement of beer or dynamite. Such labours as noble imaginings about the world and life." He looked at Miss Lenning, whose eye was kindling.

No one who has dabbled in politics can resist rhetoric of any kind.

"You send women to prison for wanting to control such folly," he went on. "Doesn't he, Miss Lenning? If I am to become a propagandist, I will do so in the cause of liberty or knowledge. I would write for Miss Lenning, or for Dr. Heseltine there, but for a military man, who merely wants food for powder, for no grand, creative principle, I would not write even if the Nicaraguans were battering St. Paul's."

"Some day," said Mrs. Heseltine, "we may become great enough to give up all this idea of Empire, and set out, like the French, to lead the world in thought and manners. We might achieve something then. France was defeated. She is now the most prosperous and the most civilized country in the world."

"And the least vital." said the Major's wife.

"But what do you mean by vital?" said Roger, guessing that she was repeating a class catch-word. "Vitality is shewn by a capacity for thought."

Maggie Fawcett interposed. "It's a very curious state of things," she said. "The intellect of the world is either trading, fighting for trade, or preparing to fight for trade. It is, in any case, pursuing a definite object. But the imagination of the world is engaged in finding a stable faith to replace the old one. It is wavering between science and superstition, neither of which will allow a compromise. You, Mr. Naldrett, if you will excuse my saying so, belong to the superstition camp. You believe that a man is in a state of grace if he goes to a tragedy,

and can tell a Francesca from a Signorelli. I belong to the science camp, and I believe that that camp is going to win. It's attracting the better kind of person; and it has an enthusiasm which yours has not. You are looking for an indefinite, rare, emotional state, in which you can apprehend the moral relations of things. We are looking for the material relations of things so that the rare emotional state can be apprehended, not by rare, peculiar people, such as men of genius, but by everybody."

"What you had better do," said Dr. Heseltine, "is, give up all this 'obsolete anachronism' of art. Science is the art of the twentieth century. You cannot paint or write in the grand manner any longer. That has all been done. Men like you ought to be stamping out preventable disease. Instead of that, you are writing of what Tom said to James while Dick fell in the water. With a fortieth part of what is wasted annually on the army alone, I would undertake to stamp out phthisis in these islands. With another fortieth part there is very little doubt that cancer could be stamped out too. With another fortieth part, wisely and scientifically administered without morbid sentiment, we could stamp out crime and other mental diseases."

"The motor-car and golf, for instance?" said Ethel Fawcett.

"Yes. And betting, 'sport,' war, idleness, drink, vice, tobacco, tea, all the abominations of life. All the reversions to incompleted types. You ought to write a play or a novel on these things. I'm not

speaking wildly. I'm speaking of a proved scientific possibility of relative human perfection. When life has been made glorious, as I can see that it could be made, then you artists could set to work to decorate it as much as you like."

"So, then," said Roger, "there are three ways to perfection, by admitting women to the suffrage, by driving men into the army, and by substituting the College of Surgeons for the Government. Now an artist is concerned above all things with moral ideas. He is not limited, or should not be, to particular truths. His world is the entire world, reduced, by strict and passionate thinking, to its imaginative essence. You and your schemes, and their relative importance, are my study, and, when I have reduced them to the ideas of progress which they embody, my material. I think that you have all made the search for perfection too much a question of profession. It is not a question of profession. It is a question of personal character." After a short pause he went on. "At the same time, there is nothing the man of thought desires so much as to be a man of action. English writers (I suppose from their way of bringing up) have been much tempted to action. Byron went liberating Greece. Chaucer was an ambassador, Spenser a sort of Irish R.M., Shakespeare an actor-manager and money-lender, or, as some think, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Writing alone is not enough for a man."

Leslie, who had been chatting to Ethel Fawcett, looked at Roger without speaking. Dinner came slowly to an end. The ladies left the room. The

men settled into their chairs. Dr. Heseltine moved the port to Lionel, with, "I suppose you're not allowed this?"

Lionel refused the port, smiling. He put a white tabloid into a little soda-water and settled into the chair next to Roger. He pulled out his cigarette case. "Will you smoke?" he asked. "These are rather a queer kind."

"No, thanks," said Roger. "I've given it up."

"I don't think I could do that," said Lionel, selecting a strange-looking cigarette done up in yellow paper, with twisted ends. "I smoke a good deal. When one's alone one wants tobacco; one gets into the way of it."

He lit a cigarette with a brown hand which trembled. Roger, noticing the tremor, and the redness of the man's eyes, wondered if he were a secret drinker. "Are you much alone?" he asked.

"A good deal," Lionel answered. "I've just been reading a book by you; it's called *The Handful.* I think you wrote it, didn't you? So you've been in the tropics, too?"

"I went to stay with an uncle at Belize, five years ago," said Roger. "I only stayed for about a month."

"Belize," said Lionel. "My chief was in Belize. Was there any yellow fever there, when you were there?"

"There was one case," said Roger.

"Did you see it?"

"No," said Roger; "I didn't."

"I should like to see yellow fever," said Lionel

simply. "I suppose there was a good deal of fuss directly this case occurred?"

"Yes," said Roger. "A gang came round at once. I think they put paraffin in the cisterns. They sealed the infected house with brown paper and fumigated it."

"And that stopped it?"

"Yes. There were no other cases."

"It's all due to a kind of mosquito," said Lionel. The white-ribbed mosquito. He carries the organism. You put paraffin on all standing puddles and pools to prevent the mosquito's larvæ from hatching out. My old chief did a lot of work in Havana, and the West Indies, stampin' out yellow fever. It has made the Panama Canal possible."

"Are you a doctor, then, may I ask?" said Roger.

"No," said Lionel. "I do medical research work; but I don't know much about it. I never properly qualified. I'm interested in all that kind of thing."

"What medical research do you do? Would it bore you to tell me?"

"I've been out in Uganda, doing sleeping sickness."

"Have you?" said Roger. "That's very interesting. I've been reading a lot of books about sleeping sickness."

"Are you interested in that kind of thing?" Lionel asked.

"Yes."

"If you care to come round to my rooms some time I would shew you some relics. I live in Pump

Court. I'm generally in all the morning, and between four and six in the evening. I could shew you some trypanosomes. They're the organisms."

"What are they like?" Roger asked.

"They're like little wriggly flattened membranes. Some of them have tails. They multiply by longitudinal division. They're unlike anything else. They've got a pretty bad name."

"And they cause the disease?"

"Yes. You know, of course, that they are spread by the tsetse fly? The tsetse fly sucks them out of an infected fish or mammal, and develops them, inside his body probably for some time, during which the organism probably changes a good deal. When the tsetse bites a man, the developed trypanosome gets down the proboscis into the blood. About a week after the bite, when the bite itself is cured, the man gets the ordinary trypanosome fever, which makes you pretty wretched, by the way."

"Have you had it?"

"Yes; rather. I have it now. It recurs at intervals."

"And how about sleeping sickness?"

"You get sleeping sickness when the trypanosome enters the cerebro-spinal fluid. You may not get it for six or seven years after the bite. On the other hand, you may get it almost at once."

"Then you may get it?" said Roger, startled, looking at the man with a respect which was half pity.

"I've got it," said Lionel.

"Got it? You?" said Roger. He stumbled in his speech. "But, forgive my speaking like this," he said; "is there a cure, then?"

"It's not certain that it's a permanent cure," said Lionel. "I've just started it. It's called atoxyl. Before I tried atoxyl I had another thing called trypanroth, made out of aniline dye. It has made my eyes red, you see? Dyed them. You can have 'em dyed blue, if you prefer. But red was good enough, I thought. Now I'm afraid I'm talking rather about myself."

"No, indeed; I'm intensely interested," said Roger. "Tell me more. Tell me about the sickness in Uganda. Is it really bad?"

"Pretty bad," said Lionel. "I suppose that a couple of hundred thousand men and women have died of it during the last seven years. I don't know how many animals besides. The tsetse will bite pretty nearly every living thing, and everything it bites gets disease of some sort. You see, trypanosomiasis is probably a new thing in Uganda. New diseases are often very deadly, I believe."

"Is the tsetse migrating, then, or can the thing be conveyed by contagion?"

"No. I don't think it's a contagious thing. I should say it almost certainly isn't. It needs direct inoculation. And as far as we know the tsetse keeps pretty near to one place all through its life."

"I know a writer who claims that we are spreading it. Is that so?"

"Indirectly. You see, East Africa is not like America or any other horse country. You haven't got much means of transport, except bearers, unless you go by river, and even then you may have to make portages. Going with natives from one district to another is sure to spread the infection.

When infected people come to a healthy district, their germs are sure to be inoculated into the healthy by some tick or bug, even if there are no tsetses to do it. I believe there are trypanosomes in the hut-bugs. I don't know, though, that hut-bugs are guiltier than any other kind. It's impossible to say. From the hour you land until the hour you sail, you are always being bitten or stung by something. Bugs, ticks, fleas, lice, mosquitoes, tsetses, ants, jiggers, gads, hippos, sandflies, wasps. You put on oil of lavender, if you have any. But even with that you are always being bitten."

"And what is the tsetse bite like?"

"You've been to Portobe, haven't you? I remember Ottalie Fawcett speaking of you, years ago, before I went out. You had that cottage at the very end of the loaning, just above the sea? Well. Did you ever go on along the cliff from there to a place where you have to climb over a very difficult barbed-wire fence just under an ash-tree? I mean just before you come to a nunnery ruin, where there is a little waterfall?"

"Yes," said Roger. "I know the exact spot. There used to be a hawk's nest in the cliff just below the barbed wire."

"Well, just there, there are a lot of those reddy-grey flies called clegs. You get them going up to Ess-na-Lara. That's another place. They bite the horses. You must have been bitten by them. Well, a tsetse is not much like a cleg to look at. It's duller and smaller. It's likest to a house-fly, except for the wings, which are unlike any other kind of insect wings. It comes at you not unlike a

cleg. You know how savage a cleg is? He dashes at you without any pretence. He only feints when he is just going to land. And he follows you until you kill him. A tsetse is like that. He'll follow you for half a mile, giving you no peace. Like a cleg, he settles down on you very gently, so that you don't notice him. You'll remember the mosquitoes at Belize. Mosquitoes are like that. Then, when he has sucked his fill and unscrewed his gimlet, you feel a smarting itch, and see your hand swollen. If you are not very well at the time a tsetse bite can be pretty bad. If you'll come to my rooms some time I'll shew you some tsetse. They're nothing to look at. They're very like common house-flies."

"And you have been studying all this on the spot? Will you tell me what made you take to it?"

"Oh, I was always interested in that kind of thing. I've always liked hot climates, and being in wild, lonely places. And then my old chief was a splendid fellow. He made me interested. I got awfully keen on it. I want to go out again. You know, I want to get at the bottom of the trypanosome. His life-history isn't known yet, as we know the cycle of the malaria parasite. We don't even know what it is in him which causes the disease. And we don't know very much really about the tsetse, nor what part the tsetse plays in the organism's life. There's a lot which I should like to find out, or try to find out. It's the trying which gives one the pleasure."

"But I think it's heroic of you," said Roger. "Are there many of you out there, doing this?"

"Not very many."

"It's a heroic thing to do," said Roger. "Heroic. The loneliness alone must make it heroic."

"You get used to the loneliness. It gives you nerves at first. But in my opinion the heat keeps you from thinking much about the loneliness. I like heat myself, but it takes it out of most of the griffs. The heat can be pretty bad."

"All the same, it is a wonderful thing to do."

"Yes. It's a good thing to spot the cause of a disease like that. But you over-rate the heroic part. It's all in the day's work. One takes it as it comes, and one has a pretty good time, too. One never thinks of the risk, which is really very slight. Doctors face worse things in London every day. So do nurses. A doctor was telling me only the other day how a succession of nurses went down to a typhus epidemic and died one after the other. There's nothing like that in the Protectorate with sleeping sickness."

"But being the only white man, away in the wilds, with the natives dying all round you!"

"Yes. That is pretty bad. I was in the middle of a pretty bad outbreak in a little place called Ikupu. It was rather an interesting epidemic, because it happened in a place where there weren't any of the tsetse which is supposed to do the harm. They may have been there; but I couldn't find any. It must have been another kind which did the damage at Ikupu. As a matter of fact, I did find trypanosomes in another kind there, which was rather a feather in my cap. Well, I was alone there. My assistant died of black-water fever. And there

I was with a sleeping village. There were about twenty cases. Most of the rest of the natives ran away, and no doubt spread the infection. Those twenty cases were pretty nearly all the society at Ikupu. Some were hardly ill at all. They just had a little fever, perhaps, or a skin complaint on the chest, and tender, swollen glands. Others were just as bad as they could be. They were in all stages of the disease. Some were just beginning to mope outside their huts. Others were sitting still there, not even caring to ask for food, just moping away to death, with their mouths open. Generally, one gets used to seeing that sort of thing; but I got nerves that time. You see, they were rather a special tribe at Ikupu. They called themselves Obmali, or some such name. Their lingo was rather rummy. Talking with the chief I got the impression that they were the relics of a tribe which had been wiped out further west. They believed that sleeping sickness was caused by a snake-woman in a swampy part of the forest. Looking after all those twenty people, and taking tests from them, gave me fever a good deal. That is one thing you have to get used to—fever. You get used to doing your work with a temperature of one hundred and two degrees. It's queer about fever. Any start, or shock, or extra work, may bring it on you. I had it, as I said, a good deal. Well, I got into the way of thinking that there was a snake-woman. A woman with a puff-adder head, all mottled. I used to barricade my hut at night against her."

Dr. Heseltine drew his chair up. "What are you two discussing? Talking about sleeping sickness?"

he asked. "How does the new treatment suit you, Lionel? No headache, I hope? It's apt to make you headachy. There's a subject for a play for you, Mr. Naldrett. 'Man and the Trypanosome.' You could bring the germs on to the stage, and kill them off with a hypodermic syringe."

"Yes," said Roger. "It has all the requirements of a modern play: strength, silence, and masculinity. There's even a happy ending to it."

Lionel began to talk to Dr. Heseltine. Roger crossed the room to talk to Leslie. He heard Lionel saying something about "waiting to give the monkey a chance." He did not get another talk with Lionel that night. After they joined the ladies, Ethel Fawcett sang. She had a good, but not very strong voice. She sang some Schumann which had been very dear to Ottalie. Her voice was a little like Ottalie's in the high notes. It haunted Roger all the way home, and into his lonely room. Sitting down before the fireplace he had a sudden vision of drenching wet grass, and a tangle of yellowing honeysuckle, heaped over a brook which gurgled. For an instant he had the complete illusion of the smell of meadowsweet, and Ottalie coming singing from the house, so sharply that he gasped.

VII

Sweet virgin rose, farewell. Heaven has thy beauty,
That's only fit for Heaven. I'll live a little,
And then, most blessed soul, I'll climb up to thee.
Farewell. *The Night Walker; or, The Little Thief.*

THE next morning he found upon his plate a letter in a strange hand. The writing was firmly formed, but ugly. The letters had a way of lying down upon each other towards the end of each word. It was not a literary hand. It was from Lionel Heseltine.

"400A, PUMP COURT, TEMPLE.

"DEAR MR. NALDRETT (it ran),

"If you would like to see my relics, will you come round next Thursday to my rooms between 4 and 5? You will see my name on the doorpost outside. I am up at the top. Your best way would be Underground to the Temple, and then up Middle Temple Lane. If the Lane door is shut you will have to go up into the Strand and then round. I hope you will be able to come.

"Yours sincerely,

"LIONEL HESELTINE."

He replied that he would gladly join him there on Thursday. He wished that Thursday were not still six days away. He was drawn to all these people who had known Ottalie. They were parts

of her life. He realized now how much people must be in a woman's life. A man has work, and the busy interests created by it. A woman has friends and the emotions roused by them. This world of Ottalie's friends was new to him. He tried to look upon them as she would have looked upon them. These had known her intimately since her childhood. They had been in her mind continually. She had lived with them. He had often felt vaguely jealous of them, when he had heard her talk of them with Agatha; or if not jealous, sad, that he should not have access to that side of her.

He was drawn to them all, but Lionel attracted him the most strongly. Some of his liking for Lionel was mere instinctive recognition of an inherent fineness and simplicity in the man's character. But there was more than that. He had often felt that in life, as in nature, there is a constant effort to remedy the unnatural. The inscrutable agency behind life offers always wisely some restoration or readjustment of a balance disturbed. He felt that a tide had quickened in his life, at the last ebbing of the old. In the old life all had been to please Ottalie. Life was more serious now. He could not go back all at once to a life interrupted as his had been. Life was not what he had thought it. In the old days it had sufficed to brood upon beautiful images, till his mind had reflected them clearly enough for his hand to write down their evocative symbols. He was not too young to perceive the austerer beauty in the room of life beyond the room in which youth takes his pleasure. But so far

his life had been so little serious that he had lacked the opportunity of perceiving it. Now the old world of the beauty of external image, well-defined and richly coloured, was shattered for him. He saw how ugly a thing it was, even as a plaything or decoration, beside the high and tragical things of life and death. It was his misfortune to have lived a life without deep emotions. Now that sorrows came upon him together, smiting him mercilessly, it was his misfortune to be without a friend capable of realizing what the issue warring in him meant. O'Neill had sent him a note from Ubrique in Andaluz, asking him to order a supply of litharge for his experiments, which were "wonderful." Pollock had sent him a note from Lyme, repaying, "with many, many thanks," the loan of fifty guineas. His "little girl was very well, and Kitty was wonderful." Besides these two he had no other intimate friends. Leslie, a much finer person than either of them, might have understood and helped his mood; but Leslie had been away in Ireland since the first fortnight. Being, therefore, much alone in his misery, Roger had come to look upon himself in London as the one sentient, tortured thing in a callous ant-swarm. He was shrinking from the sharp points of contact with the world on to still sharper internal points of dissatisfaction with himself. It was, therefore, natural that he should be strongly attracted by a man who carried a mortal disease, with a grave and cheerful spirit, serenely smiling, able, even in this last misfortune, to feel that life had been ordered well, in accordance with high law. The more he thought

of Lionel, the more he came to envy that life of mingled action and thought which had tempered such a spirit. In moments of self-despising he saw, or thought that he saw, this difference between their lives. He himself was like an old king surprised by death in the treasure-house. He had piled up many jewels of many-gleaming thought; he was robed in purple; his brain was heavy from the crown's weight. And all of it was a heavy uselessness. He could take away none of it. The treasure was all dust, rust, and rags. He was a weak and fumbling human soul shut away from his bright beloved, not only by death, but by his own swaddled insufficiency. Lionel, on the other hand, was a crusader, dying outside the Holy City, perhaps not in sight of it, but so fired with the idea of it that death was a little thing to him. All his life had been death for an idea. All his life had made dying easier. Roger's tortured mind was not soothed by thinking how their respective souls would look after death. Some men laid up treasures in heaven, others laid up treasures on earth. The writer, doubting one and despising the other, laid up treasures in limbo. He began to understand O'Neill's remark that it was "the most difficult thing in the world for an artist both to do good work and to save his own soul." Little, long-contemned scraps of medieval theology, acquired in the emotional mood during which he had been pre-Raphaelite, appealed to him again, suddenly, as not merely attractive but wise. Often, at times of deep emotion, in the fear of death, the mind finds more significance in things learned in childhood than in the attainments of

maturity. This emotion, the one real passionate emotion of his life, had humbled him. Life had suddenly shewn itself in its primitive solemnity. The old life was all ashes and whirling dust. He understood something, now, of the conflict going on in life. But he understood it quakingly, as a prophet hears the voice in the night. He saw his own soul shrivelling like a leaf in the presence of a great reality. He had to stablish that soul's foundations before he could sit down again to work. The artist creates the image of his own soul. When he sees the insufficiency of that soul, he can either remedy it or take to criticism.

Thinking over the talk of the night before, he wondered at the train of events which had altered the course of his thinking. Lionel, a few weeks before, would have been to him a charming, interesting, but misguided man, wandering in one of those sandy, sonorously named Desarts where William Blake puts Newton, Locke, and those other fine intellects, with whom he was not in sympathy. Now he saw that Lionel was ahead of him on the road. Thinking of Lionel, and wishing that he, too, had done something for his fellows, he traced the course of a tide of affairs which had been setting into his mind. It had begun with that blowing paper in the garden, as a beginning tide brings rubbish with it. Now it was in full flood with him, lifting him over shallows where he had long lain grounded. He began to doubt whether literature was so fine a thing as he had thought. Science, so cleanly and fearless, was doing the

poet's work, while the poet, taking his cue from Blake, maligned her with the malignity of ignorance. What if poetry were a mere antique survival, a pretty toy, which attracted the fine mind, and held it in dalliance? There were signs everywhere that the day of *belles-lettres* was over. Good intellects were no longer encouraged to write, "pricked on by your popes and kings." More than that, good intellects were less and less attracted to literature. The revelation of the age was scientific, not artistic. He tried to formulate to himself what art and science were expressing, so that he might judge between them. Art seemed to him to be taking stock of past achievement, science to be on the brink of new revelations.

He knew so little of science that his thought of it was little more than a consideration of sleeping sickness. He reviewed his knowledge of sleeping sickness. He thought of it no longer as an abstract intellectual question, but as man's enemy, an almost human thing, a pestilence walking in the noonday. Out in Africa that horror walked in the noonday, stifling the brains of men. It fascinated him. He thought of the little lonely stations of scientists and soldiers, far away in the wilds, in the midst of the disease, perhaps feeling it coming on, as Lionel must have felt it. They were giving up their lives cheerily and unconcernedly in the hope of saving the lives of others. That was a finer way of living than sitting in a chair, writing of what Dick said to Tom when Joe fell in the water. He went over in his mind the questions which science had to solve before the disease could be stamped out. He

wondered if there were in the literary brain some quickness or clearness which the scientific brain wanted. He wondered if he might solve the questions. Great discoveries are made by discoverers, not always by seekers. What was mysterious about the sleeping sickness ?

A little thought reduced his limited knowledge to order. The disease is spreading eastwards from the West Coast of Africa between 16° north and 16° south latitude, keeping pretty sharply within the thirty-two degrees, north and south. It is caused by an organism called a trypanosome, which enters the blood through the probosces of biting flies. It kills, when the organism enters the cerebro-spinal fluid. So much was sure. He could not say with certainty why the disease is spreading eastwards, nor why the trypanosome causes it, nor how the fly obtains the trypanosome, nor what happens to the trypanosome in the fly's body. His ignorance thus resolved itself into four heads.

As to the spreading of the disease eastwards, Lionel, who had lived in the country, might know a reason for it. He would at least have heard what the natives and the older settlers thought. Residents' reasons generally range from stories of snake-headed women in the swamp, to tales of a queer case of gin, or of " European germs changed by the climate." The simple explanation was that in mid-Africa human communications are more frequent from the west to the east than from the east to the west. The Congo is the highway.

He knew that the trypanosome is carried by the wild game. In long generations of suffering the

African big game has won for itself the power of resisting the trypanosomes. Although the trypanosomes abound in their blood, the wild animals do not develop "nagana" or "surra," the diseases which the tsetse bite sets up in most domestic animals. Something has been bred into their beings which checks the trypanosome's power. The animals are immune, or salted. But although they are immune, the wild animals are hosts to the trypanosome. In the course of time, when they migrate before the advance of sportsmen, or in search of pasture, into tsetse country as yet uninfected with trypanosome, the tsetses attacking them suck the infected blood, and receive the organisms into their bodies. Later on, as they bite, they transfer the organisms to human beings, who develop the disease. Plainly, a single migratory animal host, or a single infected slave, suffering from the initial feverish stages, might travel for three or four months, infecting a dozen tsetses daily, along his line of march. One man or beast might make the route dangerous for all who followed. Roger remembered how the chigoe or jigger-flea had travelled east along the Congo, to establish itself as an abiding pest wherever there was sand to shelter it.

As to the action of the trypanosome upon the human being, that was a question for trained scientists. It probably amounted to little more than a battle with the white corpuscles.

He passed the next few days at the Museum, studying the disease.

Mrs. Holder, who did for Lionel, let him in to Lionel's rooms on Thursday. "Mr. Heseltine was

expecting him, and would be in in a minute. Would he take a seat ? " He did so. The rooms were the top chambers of a house in Pump Court. They were nice light airy chambers, sparely furnished. The floor was covered with straw-matting. The chairs were deck-chairs. There were a few books on a bookshelf. Most of them were bound files of the *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal.* A few were medical books, picked up cheap at second-hand shops, as the price labels on the backs testified. The rest were mostly military history: *The Jena Campaign ;* Hoenig's *Twenty-four Hours of Moltke's Strategy ;* Meckel's *Tactics* and *Sommernacht's Traum ; Chancellorsville ;* Colonel Henderson's *Life of Stonewall Jackson ; Essays on the Science of War* and *Spicheren ;* Wolseley's *Life of Marlborough;* Colonel Maude's *Leipzig ;* Stoffel's contribution to the *Vie de Jules Cesar ;* a battered copy of Mahan's *War of* 1812 ; and three or four small military text-books on *Reconnaissance, Minor Tactics, Infantry Formations,* etc. A book of military memoirs lay open, face downwards, in a deck-chair. It was a hot July day, but the fire was not yet out in the grate. On the mantelpiece were some small ebony curios inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Above the mantel were a few pipes, spears, and knobkerries, a warrior's Colobus-monkey head-dress and shield, from Masai-land, a chased brass bracket-dish (probably made in England) containing cigarette-butts, and a small, but very beautiful Madonna and Child, evidently by Correggio. It was dirty, cracked, and badly hung, but it was still a noble work. Lionel, coming in abruptly, found Roger staring at it.

"I hope you've not been waiting," he said. "I've been to see my monkey. Are you fond of pictures? That's said to be a rather good one. It's by a man called Correggio. Do you know his work at all? It's rather dingy. Do you like lemon or milk in your tea? Lemon? You like lemon, do you? Right. And will you wait a minute while I give myself a last dose?"

"Can I help you?" Roger asked. "It's hypodermic, isn't it?"

"Would you mind? You shove the snout of the thing into my arm, and push the squirt. It won't take a minute." He shewed Roger into a Spartan bedroom, furnished with a camp-bed and a Sandow's exerciser.

"Now," he said, producing a bottle and a syringe, "first I'll roll up my sleeve, and then I'll shew you how to sterilize the needle. I suppose you've never done this kind of thing before? Now, jab it in just here where all the punctures are."

"You said it was your last dose," said Roger. "Does that mean that you are cured?"

"Cured for the time. I may get a relapse. Still, that isn't likely."

"How do you know that you are cured? Do you feel better?"

"I don't get insomnia," said Lionel. "No. They inject bits of me into a monkey, and then wait to see if the monkey develops the organism. The monkey's very fit indeed, so they reckon that I'm cured. Thanks. That'll do. Now I hear tea coming. Go on in, will you? I'll be out in a minute. I must get out my slides."

After tea they looked at relics, to wit, tsetse-flies, butterflies, biting flies, fragments of the same, sections of them, slides of trypanosomes, slides of filaria, slides of Laverania. "I've got these photographs, too," said Lionel. "They aren't very good; but they give you an idea of the place. This lot are all rather dark. I suppose they were over-exposed. They shew you the sort of places the tsetse likes. The hut in this one is a native hut. I lived in it while I was out there the last time. I was studying the tsetse's ways."

"They're always near water, aren't they?" Roger asked.

"Yes, generally near water. They keep to a narrow strip of cover by the side of a lake or stream. They don't like to go very far from water unless they are pursuing a victim. In fact, you're perfectly safe if you avoid fly-country. If you go into fly-country, of course they come for you. They'll hunt you for some way when you leave it. They like a shady water with a little sandy shady beach at the side. They like sand or loose soil better than mud. Mud breeds sedge, which they don't care about. They like a sort of scrubby jungle. One or two trees attract them especially. Here's a tree where about a dozen natives got it together merely from taking their siesta there."

"Does clearing the jungle do any good?"

"Oh, yes. It clears the flies out of that particular spot. But it scatters them abroad. It doesn't destroy them. It doesn't destroy the pupæ, which are buried under the roots in the ground. Burning

is better, perhaps. Burning may do for the pupæ, but then it doesn't affect the grown flies."

"Tell me," said Roger, "is blood necessary to the tsetse?"

"I wish I knew."

"I've been thinking about the spread of the disease. Is it caused by game, by slave-raiders, or by ivory-hunters? How is it spread?"

"We don't know. It seems to have followed the opening up of the Congo basin to trade. The game are reservoirs, of course."

"Have the natives any cure?"

"None. They have a disinfectant for their cattle. They boil up some bitter bark with one dead tsetse and make the cattle drink the brew. Then they fumigate the cattle with bitter smoke. They go through this business when they are about to trek cattle through fly-country. They travel at night, because the flies don't bite after dark. But the fumigation business is really useless."

"The tsetse is useless, I suppose?"

"All flies are useless."

"I like the ladybird and the chalk-blue butterfly."

"I see you're a sentimentalist. You might keep those. But all the rest I would wipe out utterly. I wish that we could wipe out the tsetse as easily as one can wipe out the germ-carrying mosquitoes."

"Has it been tried?"

"No. Well. It may have been. But in the mosquito there is a well-marked grub stage, and in the tsetse there isn't. It is so difficult to get at the chrysalids satisfactorily."

"What do the tsetses live upon? Do you mind all my questions?"

"No. Go ahead. But it must be rather boring to you. They live on anything they can get, like the commissioners who study them."

"But why do they live near water?"

"Oh, that? Some think that they suck the crocodiles; but the general opinion is that they go for air-breathing, fresh-water fish. The theory is this. In the dry season the fish have very little water. The rivers dry up, or very nearly dry up. I'm not talking of rivers like the Zambesi and the Congo, of course. Well. They dry up, leaving water-courses of shallow pools joined together by trickles. The fish are perfectly horrible creatures. They burrow into the mud of the shallows, and stay there till the rains. I suppose they keep their snouts out of the mud, in order to breathe. It is thought that the tsetses feed upon their snouts. It may not be true. Jolly interesting if it is, don't you think? Look here, excuse me if I smoke. Tell me. What is it which interests you so much in sleeping sickness? It seems so queer that you should be interested."

"I met with accounts of it not long ago, at a time when various causes had made me very sensitive to impressions. I don't know whether you ever feel that what is happening to you is part of a great game divinely ordained?"

Lionel shook his head. His look became a shade more medical.

"Well. It sounds foolish," said Roger. "But I was impressed by the way in which sleeping sick-

ness was brought to my notice again and again. So I studied it, as well as one so ignorant of science could. I am interested now, because you've been there and seen it all. It is always very interesting to hear another man's life-experience. But it is more than that. The disease must be one of the most frightful things of modern times. I think it splendid of you to have gone out, as you have, to study it for the good of mankind."

"That was only self-indulgence," said Lionel. "It's queer that you should be interested. You're the only person I've met yet since I came back who is really interested. Of course, the doctors have been interested. But I believe that most Londoners have lost the faculty for serious mental interest. It has been etiolated out of them. They like your kind of thing, 'sugar and spice and all things nice.' They like catchwords. They don't study hard nor get at the roots of things. I met a Spaniard the other day, Centeno, a chemist, I don't mean a druggist. He said that we had begun to wither at the top."

"I don't agree," said Roger. "Spain is too withered to judge. Our head is as sound oak as it always was. Were you ever a soldier, Heseltine?"

"Yes, in a sort of a way. I was in the militia."

"Did you want to be a soldier? Why did you leave it?"

"It isn't a life, unless you're on a General Staff. Everybody ought to be able to be a soldier; I believe that; but it doesn't seem to me to go very

far as a life's pursuit. One can only become a good soldier by passing all one's days in fighting. That doesn't lead to anything. I would like best of all to be a writer, only, of course, I can't be. I haven't got the brains. I suppose you'll say they're not essential."

"They are essential, and you've probably got as many as any writer; but writing is an art, and success in art depends on all sorts of subtle, instantaneous relations between the brain's various faculties and the hand. Are you really serious, though?"

"Yes. I'd give the world to be able to write. To write poetry. Or I'd like to be able to write a play. You see, what I believe is, that this generation is full of all sorts of energy which ought not to be applied to dying things. I would like to write a poem on the right application of energy. That is the important thing nowadays. The English have lots of energy, and so much of it is wasted. The energy wasted is just so much setting back the clock. The energy wasted at schools alone—— If I'd not been a juggins at school, I'd have been fully qualified by this time, and been able to get a lot more fun out of things, finding out what goes on. Don't you find writing awfully interesting?"

"I find it makes the world more interesting. Writing lets one into life. But when I meet a man like yourself I realize that it isn't a perfect life for a man. It isn't active enough. It doesn't seem to me to exercise enough of the essential nature. Have you ever tried to write? I expect you have

written a lot of splendid things. Will you shew me what you have written ? "

" Oh," said Lionel, " I've only written a few sonnets and things. Out there alone at night when the lions are roaring, you can't help it. They used to roar all round me. I was only in a native hut. It gives one a solemn feeling. I used to make up verses every night."

" Have you got any ? Won't you read them to me ? "

" You can look at them if you like," said Lionel, blushing under his tan. Like most Englishmen, he was a little ashamed of having any intelligence at all. He pulled out a little penny account-book from the drawer under the bookshelf. " They're pretty bad, I expect."

Roger looked at them.

" They're not bad at all," he said. " You've got something to say. You haven't got much ear ; but that's only a matter of training. People can always write well if they are moved or interested. Great writing happens when a carefully trained technician undergoes a deep emotion, or, still better, has survived one. Have you written prose at all ? "

" No. Prose is much more difficult. I never know when to stop."

" Nor do I. Prose becomes hard directly one begins to make it an art instead of a second nature."

He wanted to talk with Lionel about Portobe. He was in that mood in which the wound of a grief aches to be stricken. He wanted to know what Lionel had said to Ottalie, and what she had said to

him. He had that feeling which sometimes comes to one in London. "Here you are, in London, before me. And you have been in such a place and such a place, where I myself have been, and you have talked with people known to me. How wonderful life is!" To his delight, Lionel began to talk about Ireland unprompted.

"I wish I could write prose like yours," he said. "It was your prose first made me want to write. I was stopping with the Fawcetts at Portobe. It was the year before Leslie married, just before I went to India, to do Delhi-sore. Ottalie had just got that book you wrote about the Dall. You'd sent it to her. That was a fine book. I liked your little word-pictures."

"I am sorry you liked that book. It is very crude. I remember Ottalie was down on me for it."

"Ottalie was a fine person," said Lionel. "She had such a delicate, quick mind. And then. I don't know. One can't describe a woman. A man does things and defines himself by doing them, but a woman just is. Ottalie just was; but I don't know what she was. I think she was about the finest thing I've ever seen."

"Yes," said Roger, moistening dry lips. "She was like light."

"What I noticed most about her," said Lionel, taking on now the tone of a colonial who has lived much away from the society of women, "was her fineness. She did things in a way no other woman could. When I came back from the East, and went to see her—of course I used to go to Portobe fairly often when Leslie was there—it was like being

with someone from another world. She was so full of fun, too. She had a way of doing things simply. I'm not good at describing; but you know how some writers write a thing easily because they know it to the heart. Ottalie Fawcett seemed to do things simply, because she understood them to the heart, by intuition."

"Yes," said Roger. "I shall always be proud to have lived among a race which could bear such a person."

"She must be a dreadful loss," said Lionel, "to anybody who knew her well. I'm afraid you knew her well. I used to think of her when I was in Africa. She was wonderful."

"She was a wonderful spirit," Roger answered. "Tell me. I seem to know you very well, although I have hardly met you. I don't even know if your people are alive. Is your mother living?"

"No," said Lionel. "You're thinking of my old aunt who was at the At Home with me. I was stopping with her for a few days, before she left town. My people are dead."

"Are you thinking of going out again to Africa to examine sleeping sickness?"

"Yes," said Lionel. "I want to go soon. I want to go in the rains, so that I can test a native statement, that the rains aggravate the disease and tend to bring it out where it is latent. I believe it is all nonsense. Natives observe, but never deduce. Still, one ought to know."

"Would you go alone?"

"I should go out alone, I suppose. There are lots of men who would come with me to shoot lions,

but trypanosomes are less popular. You don't bring back many trophies from trypanosomes, except a hanging jaw and injected eyes."

"Are the rains very unhealthy?"

"Yes. If they bring out the latent disease, they do so by lowering the constitution. But I don't believe that they do anything of the kind. Still, the natives say that they can bring out nagana in a bitten cow by pouring a bucket of water over her."

"Look here," said Roger, "I don't want you to decide definitely till you know me better. I know how risky a thing it is to choose a companion for a journey into the wilderness, or for any undertaking of this kind. But I am dissatisfied with my work. I can't tell you more. I don't think that my work is using enough of me, or letting me grow up evenly. Besides, for other reasons, I want to give up writing. I am deeply interested in your work, and I should like to join you, if you would let me, after you know me better. I have a theory which I should like to work out."

"It would be very nice," said Lionel. "I mean it would be very nice for me. But it means pretty severe work, remember. And then, how about scientific training? I'm not properly qualified myself; but I've been at this game for seven years, and I had a hard year's training under my old chief, Sir Patrick Hamlin. I began by doing First Aid and Bearer-Party in camp. Then, when I gave up soldiering, I got a job on famine relief in India. Then old Hamlin took me under his wing, and got me to help with the plague at Bombay, and so I went on, learning whatever I could. I was very

lucky. I mean, I was able to learn a good deal, being always with Hamlin. You ought to know Hamlin. He's a very remarkable man. He stamped out Travancore ophthalmia. He made me very keen and taught me all that I know. Not that that's much. Now you are rather a griff, if you'll excuse my saying so. I wonder how soon you could make yourself useful?"

"Well, what is wanted?" said Roger. "Surely not much? What can you do with the disease? You can only inject atoxyl into a man, and pump trypanosomes out of him? I can learn how to mount and stain objects for the microscope. I have kept meteorological records. I could surely keep records of temperatures. I have no experience and no scientific knowledge; but I am not sure that my particular theory will need much more than prolonged, steady observation. Probably all the attainable scientific facts about the structures of the different varieties of tsetse are known, but the habits of the flies are very little known. I was thinking that a minute observation of the flies would be useful. It is a kind of work which a trained scientist might find dull. Now, who has really observed the tsetse's habits? It is not even known what their food is. And another thing. What is it which keeps them near the water, even when (for all that we know) the air-breathing fish are no longer burrowed in the mud? And why should they be so fond of certain kinds of jungle? And why should there not be some means of exterminating them? I could experiment in many ways."

"Yes. That is true. You could," said Lionel, puckering his face. "How do you stand heat? You're slight. You can probably stand more than a big beefy fellow."

"I did not find Belize very trying."

"Then it's an expensive business," said Lionel. "When I go out I shan't be attached to any commission. One has to go into all these sordid details pretty closely. Of course, you won't mind my giving you one or two tips. Here's my account book for a quite short trip to Ikupu. You will see that it is very costly and very wasteful."

Roger looked at the account-book. The cost of the Ikupu trip was certainly heavy. The relatives of two bearers who had been eaten by lions had received compensation. The widow of the dead assistant had received compensation. A month's stores had been thrown away by deserting bearers. The dirty, dog's-eared pages gave him a sense of the wasteful, deathy, confused life which goes on in new countries before wasteful, cruel, confused nature has the ideas of her "rebellious son" imposed upon her. "We went out seventy strong," said Lionel, "to go to Ikupu. We had bad luck from the very start. Only twelve of us ever got there. You see, my assistant, Marteilhe, was frightfully ill. I had fever on and off the whole time. So the bearers did what they liked. It's a heart-breaking country to travel in. It's like Texas. 'A good land for men and dogs, but hell for women and oxen.' What do you think? Does it seem to you to be worth the waste?"

"Very well worth," said Roger, handing back

the book. "If I fail to do one little speck of good there, it will have been very well worth, both for my own character and for my own time."

"I don't quite see your point," said Lionel.

"Well," said Roger, moved. "I want to be quite sure of certain elements in myself, before I settle down to a literary life. That life, if it be in the least worthy, is consecrated to the creation of the age's moral consciousness. In the old time a writer was proved by the world before he could begin to create his "ideas of good and evil." Homer never existed, of course, but the old idea of a poet's being blind is very significant. Poets must have been men of action, like the other men of their race. They only became poets when they lost their sight, or ceased, through some wound or sickness, to be efficient in the musters, when, in fact, their lives were turned inwards. Nowadays that is changed, Heseltine. A man writes because he has read, or because he is idle, or greedy, or vicious, or vain, for a dozen different reasons; but very seldom because his whole life has been turned inward by the discipline of action, thought, or suffering. I am not sure of myself. Miss Fawcett's death has brought a lot into my life which I never suspected. I begin to think that a writer without character, without high and austere character, in himself, and in the written image of himself, is a panderer, a bawd, a seller of Christ." He rose from his chair. He paced the room once or twice. "Jacob Boehme was right," he went on. "We are watery people. Without action we are stagnant. If you sit down to write, day after day, for

months on end, you can feel the scum growing on your mind." He sat down again, staring at the Correggio. "There," he said, "that is all it is. I sometimes feel that all the thoroughly good artists, like Dürer, Shakespeare, Michael Angelo, Dante, all of them, sit in judgment on the lesser artists when they die. I think they forgive bad art, because they know how jolly difficult art of any kind is. I don't believe that art was ever easy to anybody, except perhaps to women, whose whole lives are art. But they would never forgive faults of character or of life. They would exact a high strain of conduct, mercilessly. Good God, Heseltine, it seems to me terrible that a man should be permitted to write a play before he has risked his life for another, or for the State."

"Well," said Lionel, picking up his cigarette, which had fallen to the floor, scattering sparks. "Yes." He pressed his forefinger reflectively on each crumb of fire one after the other. "Yes. But look here. I met that French poet fellow, Mongeron, the other day, the day before yesterday. He said that action was unnecessary to the man of thought, since the imagination enabled him to possess all experience imaginatively."

"Yes. I know that pleasant theory. I agree," said Roger. "But only when action has formed the character. I take writing very seriously, but I want to be sure that it is the thing which will bring out the best in me. I am doubtful of that. I am doubtful even whether art of any kind is not an anachronism in this scientific century, when so much is being learned and applied to the bettering

of life. As I said the other night, my State is the human mind. If this art, about which I have spilled such a lot of ink, be really a survival, what you call in dissecting-rooms 'a fossil,' then I am not helping my State, but hindering her, by giving all my brains' vitality to an obsolete cause. One feels very clever, with these wise books in one's head; but they don't go down to bed-rock. They don't mean much in the great things of life. They don't help one over a death."

"No," said Lionel reflectively. "I think I see all your points." He made the subject practical at once, feeling a little beyond his depth in ethics. "It would be a very interesting experience for you to go out," he said. "A fine thing, too; for it is very difficult to get a good brain to take up a subject in that particular way. Still, one ought not to waste a good brain like yours in watching tsetses."

"No imaginative work is wasted," said Roger. "The experience would add a great deal to me. I should feel more sure of being able to face the judge after death."

"How about the practice of your art?"

"That will not be hurt by the deepening of my interests."

"Come on out to dinner," said Lionel. "I generally go to Simpson's. We'll go into Committee of Supply. The first thing we shall have to do is to try to get you the job of bottle-washer to somebody's clinic. What I want to do when I get out there is this, Naldrett. I want to get right away into the back of beyond, into the C. F. S., or wherever

there is not much chance of the natives having mixed with Europeans. I want to find out if there is any native cure, if any native tribes are immune, as they are to malaria, and whether their cattle, if they have any, are immune, like the game. You will guess that what I want to do is to prepare anti-toxins strong enough to resist the disease at any stage, and also to act as preventives. That's the problem as it seems to me. It may sound a little crazy."

"Is the tsetse immune?" said Roger. "Does anybody know anything about flies? If the tsetse is immune, why could not an anti-toxin be prepared from the tsetse? It would be more than science. It would be equity."

They walked along the Strand together.

"Anti-toxins must wait," said Roger, as they stopped before crossing Wellington Street. "The first thing we had better do is to go for a long tramp together, to see how we get along."

"We might charter a boat, and try to get round the north of Ireland," said Lionel. "Dublin to Moville. It would be a thorough eye-opener. Then we might walk on round the coast to Killybegs. Old Hamlin will be back by the end of August. He would prescribe you a course of study. We might do some reading together."

In the Strand, outside Simpson's, a procession of dirty boys followed a dirty drunkard who was being taken to Bow Street by two policemen. Newsboys, with debased, predatory faces, peered with ophthalmic eyes into betting news. Other symptoms of disease passed.

"Plenty of disease here," said Roger.

"All preventable," said Lionel. "Only we're not allowed to prevent it. People here would rather have it by them to reform. Science won't mix with sentiment, thank God!" They entered Simpson's.

VIII

And here will I, in honour of thy love,
Dwell by thy grave, forgetting all those joys
That former times made precious to mine eyes.
The Faithful Shepherdess.

TEN months later Roger sat swathed in blankets under mosquito netting, steering a boat upstream. He was in the cold fit of a fever. The bows of the boat were heaped with the cages of laboratory animals and with boxes, on the top of which a negro sat, singing a song. The singer clapped gravely with his hands to mark the time. "Marumba is very far away," he sang. "Yes. It is far away, and nobody ever got there." At times, pausing in his song to lift a hand to Roger, he pointed out a snag or shoal. At other times the rowers, lifting their paddles wearily, sang for a few bars in chorus, about the bones on the road to Marumba. Then the chorus died; the paddles splashed; the tholes grunted. The boat lagged on into the unknown, up the red, savage river, which loitered, and steamed, and stank, like a river of a beginning earth.

Lionel, heaped with blankets, lay at Roger's feet. His teeth were chattering. The wet rag round his forehead had slipped over his eyes. The debile motion of the hand which tried to thrust the rag away, so that he might see, told of an intense petu-

lant weakness. By him lay a negro, wasted to a skeleton, who watched Roger with a childish grave intentness out of eyes heavy with death.

The boat ground slowly past a snag. Roger, raising himself upon a box, looked out painfully over the river bank to the immense distance beyond, where, in a dimness, mists hung. To the right, a mile or two from the river, was forest, sloping to an expanse of water, intensely blue. Beyond the water was grass sloping up to forest. The forest jutted out, immense, dark, silent. Nothing lay beyond it but forest, trees towering up, trees fallen, uprooted, rotting, a darkness, a green gloom. Over it was the sky, of hard, bright blue metal, covered with blazing films. Outside it, like captains halted at the head of a horde, were solitary, immense trees, with ruddy boles. To each side of them, the forest stretched, an irregular wilderness of wood, grey, rather than green, in the glare aloft; below, darker. The water at the foot of the slope opened out in bays, ruffled by the wind, shimmering. Reeds grew about the bays. A cluster of tall, orange-blossomed water-plants hid the rest from Roger's sight as the boat loitered on.

To the left it was a sometimes swampy plain-land, reaching on into the mists, with ants' nests for milestones. Little gentle hills rose up, some of them dotted with thorn-trees. They were like the stumps of islands worn away by the river, when, long ago, it had brimmed that plain-land from the forest to the far horizon.

Far ahead, to the left of the river, Roger noticed a slightly larger hill. It held his gaze for a few

minutes. It stood up from the plain exactly like a Roman camp which he had visited in England long before, one Christmas Day. He liked to look at it. There was comfort in looking at it. It was like a word from Europe, that hill beyond there, greyish in the blinding light. It was like a Roman camp, like military virtue, order, calm, courage, dignity. He needed some such message. He was in command of a shipload of suffering. He was wandering on into the unknown, in charge of dying men. Smoke was rising from below the hill, a single spire of smoke. He hailed the singer.

"Merrylegs," he cried, "what is the smoke there?"

"Jualapa," said the man, standing up to look. "Jualapa."

"It can't be Jualapa," said Lionel petulantly, struggling to lift his blankets. "Oh, stop that noise, Roger. It shakes my head to pieces."

"Jualapa," cried the rowers excitedly. "Jualapa." They dropped their paddles. Standing on the thwarts they peered under the sharps of their hands at the rising smoke. They rubbed their bellies, thinking of meat. One of them, beating his hands together, broke into a song about Jualapa.

Roger, stumbling forward, shaken by sickness, bade them to give way, quietly. The jabbering died down as the tholes began again to grunt. Merrylegs, still clapping his hands, broke into another song.

Jualapa is near. Yes, Jualapa is near. Not like Marumba.
We will eat meat in Jualapa. Much meat. Much meat.
The men of Little Belly will eat meat in Jualapa.

"Shut your silly head, Merrylegs," cried Roger angrily. The song broke off. Merrylegs began to tell the bow-oar what meat there would be in Jualapa. He said that there would be cattle, and perhaps a diseased cow among them. The rowing seemed to freshen a little. The boat dragged on a little quicker.

"How are you, Lionel?" Roger asked. It was a foolish question.

"Oh, for God's sake don't ask silly questions," said Lionel very weakly. "Do leave me alone."

For answer, Roger gently renewed the compress round the sick man's head. From the thirst which was torturing him he guessed that his fever's hot fit would soon begin. He prayed that it might keep off until they had reached the smoke. They were probably nearing some village. They might camp at the village. Only he would have to be well when they reached the village. He would have to get Lionel ashore, into some comfortable hut. He would have to feed him there with some strong comforting broth. Before he could do that, he would have to see the village headman. He would have to look after the bearers. The boat would have to be moored. Some of her gear would have to be unloaded.

There could be no thought of going on, upstream, to Jualapa, in their present state. A native had told them, the day before, that Jualapa, three days' journey upstream, was stricken with sleeping sickness. "All were sleeping," he said. "Men, women, and little children. The cattle were not milked at Jualapa." It was the first time that they

had heard of the disease since leaving the coast. They had decided to attempt Jualapa.

They were both suffering from fever. They would have been glad to camp for a few days before pushing on; but Lionel forbade it. The rowers were getting homesick. Three of them had contracted dysentery. He felt that if they called a halt anywhere their men would desert them. The important thing was to push on, he said, to carry the men so far that they would be afraid to run. If the men deserted after the leaders had engaged the disease, well and good, there would be the work to do. But if they deserted before that, the expedition would end before Roger took his first lumbar puncture. It was the last sensible decision Lionel had been able to make. His fever had recurred within the hour. Since then he had been dangerously ill, so ill, and with such violent changes of temperature, that his weakness, now that the fever lifted, frightened Roger.

Roger shook and chattered, trying to think. He was ill; so ill that he could not think clearly. The horrible part of it, to him, was to be just clear enough in his head to fear to change Lionel's decision. He wanted to change for Lionel's sake; but with this fever smouldering in his brain, surging and lifting, like a hot blast withering him, the plan seemed august, like a law of the Medes and Persians. He was afraid of changing. At last, in a momentary clearing of the head, he made up his mind to change. He would anchor. They would halt at the smoke. They would land and camp. Nothing could be done till the leaders were cured. If the

men deserted, he would trust to luck to be able to hire new men. He could not go on like this; Lionel might die. The fever closed in upon his mind again, surging and withering. The air seemed strangely thick. Merrylegs wavered and blurred. The boat grounded on a mud-bank, and brushed past some many-shimmering reeds with a long swish. The dying negro, stirred by some memory, which the noise had awakened in him, raised himself faintly, asking something. He fell back faint, closing his eyes, then opening them. He beat with one hand, jabbering the name Mpaka. His teeth clenched. He was in the death agony. One of the stroke-oars, clambering over the boxes in the stern-sheets, beat the dying man upon the chest. He was beating out the devil, he explained. He soon grew tired. He shouted in the sick man's ear, laughed delightedly at his groans, and went forward to explain his prowess. He broke out into a song about it.

> Kilemba has a big devil in his belly.
> Big devil eat up Kilemba. Eat all up.
> But Muafi a strong man. Very strong man. Devil no good. Not eat Muafi.

They swept round a bend, where crocodiles, like great worm-casts, sunned and nuzzled, with mud caking off their bellies. The boat passed into a broad, above which, the hill like a Roman camp rose up. Pink cranes stood in the shallows. Slowly, one of them rose aloft, heavily flagging. Another rose, then another, then another, till they made a pinkish ribbon against the forest. Following the

line of their flight Roger saw a few delicate deer leave their pasture, startled by the starting of the cranes. They moved off daintily, looking uneasily behind them. Soon they broke into a run.

On the left bank, in a space of poor soil, covered with shingle by a freshet, some vultures cowered and sidled about a dead thing. Roger stared stupidly at them. Something of a warning of death moved through the surging of his fever. He said to himself that there was death here. Words spoke in his brain, each word like a fire-flash. "No white man has ever been here before. You are the first. Take care. There is death here." Some vague fear of possible war, so vague that he was not quite certain that it was not a memory of a war-scare at home, made him look to his revolver. He thrust up the catch with his thumb, and stared at the seven dull brass discs pulled slightly forward by the extractor. There were seven, and we are seven, and there were seven planets. The fever made him stare at the opened breech for a full minute.

Out of some tall water-plants, whose long, bluish-grey leaves looked very cool in the glare of heat, came flies. They came to the attack with a whirling fierceness like clegs. They were small, brown, insignificant flies. They were tsetse flies. The boat pulled out into the open to avoid them. After a few more minutes Roger called upon the rowers to stop rowing.

He was in the middle of the broad, looking at the left bank, where a trodden path led to the water's edge. For many centuries men and beasts

had watered there. The path had worn a deep rut into the bank. What struck Roger about it was its narrowness. It was the narrow track of savages. The people who made it had used it fearfully, one at a time, full of suspicion, like drinking deer. Their fear had had a kind of idealism about it. It might truly be said of those nervous drinkers that when they drank, they drank to the good health of their State. Even in his fever, the sight of the path shocked Roger with a sense of the danger of life in this place. What was the danger ? What was the life ?

Beyond the track, at a little distance from the river, was a thick thorn hedge surrounding a village. From the midst of the village a single stream of smoke arose. It went up straight for a foot or two, behind the shelter of the hedge. Then it blew down gustily, in wavering puffs. There was no other sign of life in the village. A few hens were picking food in the open. A cow, standing with drooped head above the corpse of her calf, awaited death. Her bones were coming through her skin, poor beast. There were black patches of flies upon her. Three vultures waited for her. One of them was stretching his wings with the air of a man yawning. Vultures were busy about a dead cow in the middle distance. Dark heaps, further off, had still something of the appearance of cows. The men, looking earnestly about from the tops of the boxes, jabbered excitedly, pointing. Roger unslung his binoculars and stared at the silent place. He could see no one. There were dead cows, a dying cow, and those few clucking hens. He wondered

if there could be an ambush. The grass was tall enough, in the clumps, to shelter an enemy; but the wild birds passed from clump to clump without fear. In a bare patch, two scarlet-headed birds were even fighting together. Their neck feathers were ruffled erect. They struck and tugged. They rose, flapping, to cuff each other with their wings. Leaping aloft they thrust with their spurs. A hen, less brilliantly coloured, watched the battle. But for these birds the place was peaceful. The wind ruffled the grass; the smoke was gusty; one of the poultry crooned with a long gurgling cluck.

Something made Roger look from the village to the hill like a Roman camp. It glistened grey in the sun-blaze. The dance of the air above it was queer, almost like smoke. He stared at it through his glasses. After a long look he turned to stare into the water to rest his eyes. "I am mad," he said to himself. "I am dreaming this. Presently I shall wake up." He looked again. There could be no doubt of it. The hill was covered with a grey stone wall at least thirty feet high. There, about three-quarters of a mile away, was the ruin of an ancient town, as old, perhaps, as the Pharaohs. There was no doubt that it was old. Parts of it, undermined by burrowing things, or thrust out by growing things, were fallen in heaps. Other parts were overgrown twelve feet thick, with vegetation. Trees grew out of it. A few cacti upon the wall-top were sharply outlined against the sky. On the further end of the wall there was a fire-coloured blaze, where some poisonous weed, having stifled down all weaker life, triumphed in sprawling

yellow blossoms, spotted and smeared with drowsy juice. There were dense swarms of flies above it as Roger could guess from the movements of the birds across the patch. He watched the ruin. There was no trace of human occupation there. No smoke shewed there. Apparently the place had become a possession for the bittern. Wild beasts of the forests lay there, owls dwelt there, and satyrs danced there. It was as desolate as Babylon at the end of Isaiah xiii.

He looked at the men to see what effect the ruin had upon them. They did not look at it. They had the limited primitive intelligence, which cannot see beyond the facts of physical life. They were looking at the village, jabbering as they looked.

"What are we stopping for?" said Lionel.

"There's a village," said Roger. "It seems to have cattle plague." Lionel struggled weakly to a sitting position, and looked out with vacant eyes.

"There's a ruin on the hill, there," said Roger.

"Plague and ruin are the products of this land," said Lionel. "Don't stand there doddering, Naldrett. Find out what's happening here."

"Look here, you rest," said Roger with an effort. "Just lie back on the blankets here, and rest."

"How the devil am I to rest when you won't keep the gang quiet?"

"You just close your eyes, Lionel," said Roger. "Close them. Keep them close." He sluiced a rag in the shallow water. "Here's a new compress for you."

He ordered the men to pull in to the watering-

place, while he looked about in what he called the toy box for presents for the village chief. He took some copper wire, a few brass cartridge shells, some green beads, some bars of brightly coloured sealing wax, a doll or two, of the kind which say, "Mamma," when stricken on the solar plexus, a doll's mirror, a knife, an empty green bottle, and a tin trumpet. He tilted a white-lined green umbrella over Lionel's head. He slipped over the side as the boat grounded. Merrylegs followed him, carrying the presents. They slopped through shallow water, and climbed the bank.

Merrylegs, clapping his hands loudly, called to the villagers in the Mwiri dialect that a king, a white man, a most glorious person, was advancing to them. Roger asked him if he had heard of this village at their stopping-place the day before. No, he said, he had never heard of this village. It was a poor place, very far away; he had never heard of it. He called again, batting with his hands. No answer came. Roger, looking anxiously about, saw no sign of life. No sign shewed on the city wall. A new vulture, lighting by the dying cow, eyed him gravely, without enthusiasm. One of those already there flapped his wings again as though yawning. "Merrylegs," said Roger, "we must go into the village." He shifted round his revolver holster, so that the weapon lay to hand. They skirted the zareba till they came to the low hole, two feet square, which led through the thorns into the town. The mud of the road was pounded hard by the continual passing of the natives. Fragments of a crudely decorated pottery were trodden in here and

there. Lying down flat, Merrylegs could see that the stakes which served as door to the entrance, were not in place inside the stockade. The visitor was free to enter. "Think all gone away," said Merrylegs. "Slave man he catch."

Roger did not now believe in the theory of slave man. "It is nonsense," he said. "Nonsense. There must be death here." He stood by the gate, breathing heavily, not quite knowing, from time to time, what he was doing, at other times knowing clearly, but not caring. Little things, the crawling of a tick, the cluck of a hen, the noise of his own breath, seemed important to his fever-clogged brain. "I'll go in," he said, at last.

"Not go in," said Merrylegs promptly. "Perhaps inside. Perhaps make him much beer. All drunk him." He called again in Mwiri, but no answer came. A hen, perhaps expecting food, came clucking through the hole, cocking her eyes at the strangers. Roger, finding a bit of biscuit in his pocket, dropped it before her. She worried it away from his presence, and gulped it down gluttonously before the other hens could see.

Roger knelt down. Peering up the tunnel he tried to make out what lay within. He could not see. The entrance passage had been built with a bend in the middle for the greater safety of the tribe. For all that he could know, a warrior might lie beyond the bend, ready to thrust a spear into him. He did not think of this till a long time afterwards. He began to shuffle along the passage on all fours. Nothing lay beyond the bend. He clambered to his feet inside the village. "Come

on in, Merrylegs," he called. Merrylegs came. They looked about them.

The village formed an irregular circle about two hundred yards across. Inside the thorn hedge it was strongly palisaded with wooden spikes, nine feet high, bound together with wattle, and plastered with a mud-dab. The huts stood well away from the palisade. They formed a rough avenue, shaped rather like a sickle. There were thirty-five huts still standing. The frames of two or three others stood, waiting completion. One or two more had fallen into disrepair. Several inhabitants were in sight, both men and women.

They were sitting on the ground, propped against the palisades or the walls of their huts, in attitudes which recalled the attitude of the negro, seen long before in the photograph in the Irish hotel. One of the men, rising unsteadily to his feet, walked towards them for some half-dozen paces, paused, seemed to forget, and sank down again, with a nodding head. A child, rising up from a log, crawled towards a hen. The hen, suspecting him, moved off. The child watched it strut away from him as though trying to remember what he had planned to do to it. He stood stupidly, half asleep. Slowly he laid himself down upon the ground, with the movement of an old man careful of the aches of his joints. It seemed to Roger that the child had never really been awake. It was the slow deliberate movement of the child which convinced him, through his fever, that he was in the presence of the enemy. "These people have sleeping sickness," he said. The words seemed to

echo along his brain, "sleeping sickness, sickness, sickness." This was what he had come out to see. Here was his work cut out for him. This was sleeping sickness. Here was a village down with it. It was shocking to him. Had he been in health it would have staggered him. These sleepers were never going to awake. All these poor wasting wretches were dying. He had never seen death at work on a large scale before. He checked a half-formed impulse to bolt by stepping forward into the enclosure, into the reek of death. The place was full of death. He drove Merrylegs before him. Merrylegs knew the disease. Merrylegs had no wish to see more of it. He was for bolting. "Go on, Merrylegs," said Roger. "Sing out to them."

Merrylegs got no answer. "Only dead men here," he said. "Young men, no catch him, run."

"Come on round the huts then," said Roger. "We'll see how many have run." They went to the hut from which the smoke rose.

An old, old hideous woman was crouched there over a little fire. She was trembling violently, and mumbling with her gums. She cowered away from Roger with a wailing cry, very like the cry of a rabbit caught by a weasel. "Tiri," she said, "tiri," expecting death. Merrylegs asked her questions; Roger tried her. It was useless. She did not understand them. She mumbled something, shaking her poor old head, whimpering between the words. Roger gave her a doll, which she hugged and whimpered over. She was like a child of a few months old in the body of a baboon. They tried another hut.

From the number of food pots stored there, Roger guessed that this hut had once belonged to a chief. Two women lay there, one in the last stages of the sickness, very ill, and scarcely stirring, the other as yet only apathetic. She blinked at them as they entered the hut, without interest, and without alarm, just like an animal. She might once have been a comely woman, but the drowsiness of the sickness had already brought out the animal in her face. Her ornaments of very thin soft gold shewed that she was the wife of an important person; she may perhaps have been the chief's favourite. She did not understand Merrylegs' dialect, nor he hers. Possibly, as sometimes happens in the disease, she had no complete control over her tongue. Roger thought that she might be thirsty. He poured water for her. She did not drink. It occurred to Roger then that she might be welcoming the disease, giving way to it without a struggle, after losing husband and child. He could see that she had had a child, and there was no child there. "Poor woman," he said to himself. "Poor wretch." They went out into the open again.

At the further end of the village Roger found evidence which helped him to make a theory of what had happened. Just outside the palisade were the bones of a few bodies, which, as he supposed, were those who had died, after the first breaking out of the epidemic. If the epidemic had begun two months before, as seemed likely, these men and women must have been dead for about a fortnight. The sickness and mortality had steadily

increased since then. The able, uninfected inhabitants, had at last migrated together. They had gone off with their arms and cattle to some healthier place, leaving the infected to die. He could make no other explanation. Many of the huts were deserted. In others, still living sleepers lay among corpses. Three young men, a boy, and an old man were the liveliest of the remaining inhabitants. Roger had only to look at their tongues to see that they, too, were sealed for death. The tongue moved from the root with a helpless tremor. Their lymphatic glands were swollen. They themselves were under no delusions about their state. The cloud was on them. They would not speak unless they were spoken to with some sharpness. They were gloomily waiting until the ailment should blot everything away from them. Merrylegs tried to understand them; but gave it up. "Very poor men," he said. "Know nothing." They were some relic (or outpost) of a strange tribe, speaking an unknown tongue. Perhaps they were the descendants of some little wandering band, separated from its parent tribe, by war, pestilence, or mischance. They had had their laws, their arts, their customs. They had even thriven. The game of life had gone pleasantly there. Life there had been little more than a sitting in the sun, between going to the river for a drink and to the patch for a mealie. The beauties had sleeked themselves with oil, and the strong ones had made themselves fat with butter. They had lived "naturally," like plants or animals, sharing the wild things' immunity from ailments. They were completely adjusted.

Now some little change had altered their relations to nature. Something had brought the trypanosome. Now they died like the animals, deserted by their kind.

The first shock of the sight of this harvest of death came upon Roger dully, through the shield of his fever. He did not realize the full horror of it. Nor was he conscious of the passage of time. He stayed in the village for a full hour before he returned to the boat. In that hour he made rough notes of the twenty-nine cases still present there. Sixteen of them, he hoped, might yield to treatment. The others were practically dead already from wasting. The preparation of the notes, brief as they were, was a great drain upon his strength. The fever was gaining on him. He found himself staring vacantly between the writing of two words. His brain was a perpetual surging tumult. His eyes seemed to burn in their sockets. He remembered Lionel with a great start. "Lionel," he repeated. "I must tell Lionel. We shall stop here."

Outside the infected village he looked for tracks. A track led towards the ruin. Another led away across the plain. Both were as narrow as a horse's girth, and beaten as hard as earthenware. The old tracks of cattle crossed them. Merrylegs, looking about upon the ground, cried out that the tribe had gone over the plain with their cattle ten or eleven days before. He pointed to marks on the ground. Roger took his word for it.

He climbed into the stern-sheets of the boat, feeling as though hot metal were being injected into his joints. "How are you now, Lionel?" he

asked. "You're looking pretty bad. This is a plague spot. They've got the sickness here. They're dying of it."

"Couldn't you have come and told me before this?" said Lionel. "I've been lying here not knowing whether you were dead or alive."

"I'd a lot of huts to examine," he answered. "What do you think? We had better stop here, eh? We had better make this our station. The first thing I shall do will be to get you into a bed."

"That's like you," said Lionel. "You make plans when I'm sick and can't veto them. My God, if I'd known it was going to be like this! Well, I'll never work with a griff again."

"It's time for your medicine," said Roger stolidly, in order to change the subject. He poured the white powder into a cigarette paper, and handed it to the patient.

"Don't you dare to give me medicine," Lionel answered, knocking the dose away. "I believe you're poisoning me. I've watched you. You're poisoning me."

"Don't say things like that, Lionel," said Roger. "You're awfully tired, I know, but they hurt. I wish I could get you well," he mused. "It's not so easy as you seem to think," he added.

"What isn't?"

"Life here."

"That's because you're such a silly ass. I'm all right. I only want to be left alone. Well. Get the men ashore, can't you? Get some sort of a camp pitched."

"I am going to," said Roger. "I am going to

camp on the hill there for to-night, among the ruins." He gave some orders.

Lionel sat up. "Merrylegs," he said, "drop that. I command here."

"Look here, Heseltine," said Roger. "I must do this."

"You shall not wreck the expedition," said Lionel. "You're as ignorant as a cow. You haven't even examined the ruin."

Roger paid no attention to him. He bade the men moor the boat and unload her.

"Naldrett," said Lionel, "if you persist in this—when I'm sick and can't stop you—it's the end of our working together. We part company. Put down that box, Merrylegs. Leave those things in the boat."

Roger had more strength left in him than his companion. The boat was unloaded. The bearers, leaving a pile of boxes by the river, formed an Indian file and marched with their burdens of necessaries towards the hill. Lionel walked, supported by Roger. He did not speak. His face worked with the impotent anger of a sick man. Presently Roger noticed that he was crying from mere nervous weakness. He felt that it would be well to say nothing. Lionel's petulance was the result of fever. If he said anything, the petulant mood would surely twist it into a cause of offence. He said nothing. Lionel, after pausing a minute, said something in a faint voice about the heat. Roger had not noticed the heat. He had a glowing lime-kiln within him. He stopped, and asked if it were very hot. "God!" said Lionel disgustedly.

They walked on, following the bearers. Presently Lionel stopped and swore at the heat. Roger waited. Each moment of waiting was torture to him. Each moment of physical effort racked him. He wanted to fling himself down and let the fever run its course.

"God almighty!" said Lionel, turning on him. "Can't you answer me?"

"I didn't know that you spoke to me."

"You don't know anything."

"You were not speaking to me, you were swearing at the heat."

"What if I were?"

"If you could manage to keep quiet till we are camped," said Roger, "you'd feel better. I'm doing my best for you."

"You are," said Lionel, "you are. I'm dying to see the sort of rotten camp you'll make when you're left by yourself."

"Shut up," said Roger. "Shut up. I'm too ill to talk." The fever was whirling in him now. He could not trust himself to say more. He was near the delirious stage. He remembered smelling the smell of death, in a foul sultry blast, while Merrylegs said something about the kraal in the hollow. Looking, half-drowsed, to his left, he saw a kraal littered with dead and dying cattle, among which gorged vultures perched. Afterwards, he remembered the ruins of a wall, standing now about three feet high. It was built of good hewn stone, well laid, with one crenellated course just below its present top. He could never remember getting over the wall. There were many sunflowers.

Immense orange sunflowers with limp wavy petals. Sunflowers growing out of a litter of neatly wrought stones. Mosquitoes came "pinging" about him, winding their sultry horns. Those little horns seemed to him to be the language of fever. They suggested things to him. The men were a long, long time pitching the tent. Something was wrong with one of the men. The other men were keeping apart from him. The beds with their nettings were ready at last. Fire was burning. Something with a smell of soup was being cooked. In his sick fancy it was the smell of something dead. He told them to take it away. He saw Lionel somewhere, much as a man at the point of death may see the doctor by his bedside. He could not be sure which of the two of them was the living one. Then there came a moment when he could not undo the fastening of his mosquito net. He saw his bed inside. He longed to be in bed. All this torture would be over directly he was in bed, wrapped up. But he could not get in. The bed was shut from him by the mosquito net. He wanted to get in. He would give the world to be in bed. But he did not know how he was to move the netting, everything smelt of death so strongly. It was very red everywhere, a smoky, whirling red, with violent lights. People were crossing the dusk, or rather not people, but streaks of darkness. They were making a great crying out. They were too noisy. Why could they not be quiet? He ceased to fumble at the net. He began to see an endless army of artillery going over a pass. The men were all dark; the guns were all painted black; the horses were black. They

were going uphill endlessly, endlessly, endlessly. He cried out to them to stop that driving, to do anything rather than go on and on and on in that ghastly way. Instantly they changed to tsetses, riding on dying cattle. They were giant tsetses, with eyes like cannon-balls. An infernal host of trypanosomes wriggled around them. The trypanosomes were wriggling all over him. A giant tsetse was forcing his mouth open with a hairy bill, so that the trypanosomes might wriggle down his throat. A flattened trypanosome, tasting as flabby as jelly, was worming over his lips.

The fit passed off in the early morning, leaving him weak, but alert. Something was going to happen. The air was as close as a blast from a furnace. He sat up, holding by the tent-pole. He could see a star or two. He wished that the horrible smell would go. It seemed to be everywhere.

"Lionel," he said.

"Yes," said a faint voice.

"Have you slept?"

"Yes. I've had a long sleep. How are you?"

"The fit's gone. But I feel queer. Something's going to happen."

"It's very close. It will pass off before morning. Fever plays the devil with one, doesn't it?"

"Are you quite better now?"

"Yes. I shall be all right now. You'll be all right after some breakfast. It isn't so bad here, is it?"

"No. Not so bad. But there's this smell of death, Lionel."

"That's fever. That will pass away, you'll find."

"Was I delirious?"

"Yes. A little."

"You were pretty bad."

"Yes. I was pretty bad all yesterday," said Lionel. "It's horrible when one gets into that state. One is so ashamed afterwards. It is part of the sickness. You were awfully gentle with me, Roger."

"I saw that you were pretty bad. We shall have to get to work to-morrow, and get things into order. They are in a bad way in the village there. There are twenty-nine cases left. We might save sixteen of them."

"Is there any trace of how they got it? Do they know?"

"They don't talk any language known to Merrylegs."

"I see. What are they like? Are they a good lot?"

"Yes. They are good type negroes. They look as if they might have something better in them than negro blood. Something Arabian. And there's this ruin here."

"It will be fun looking at the ruin. I wonder if it's like the Rhodesian ruins. I've seen those. If it is, there ought to be gold here. Wrought gold as well as crude. But we mustn't think of that."

"No. Let's have no side-issues. I suppose we'd better start an isolation camp to-morrow."

"Yes. Get them all out and burn the village. Then we'll start the treatment."

"It would be rather a feather in our caps if we found a tsetse-cide. A bird would be better than

nothing. Or an ichneumon-fly to pierce the pupæ."

"I was young myself once," said Lionel. "I know exactly how it feels." There was a pause after this. Lionel seemed to chuckle.

"Can't you go to sleep again, Lionel?"

"No. It's too close."

"It's jolly looking at the stars. And I can see right out into the wilderness. The moon is wonderful. It is very vast out here. And lonely. It gives one a strange sense of being full of memories. I wonder who built these ruins."

"Phœnicians, I suppose. In Africa one puts everything down to Phœnicians. In the Mediterranean it used to be some other fellows; now it's Iberians. Aryans had a great vogue forty years ago; but they're dead, now. Then there were those sloppy Celts. It'll be the Hittites when we get back."

"Did you see Great Zimbabwe?"

"Yes. But they're all called Zimbabwe. It's a native name for ruins. It's an uncanny place. It lies all open. There's no roof to it. None of them have any roof. Nothing but great high walls, and two hideous cones of stone, and a lot of corpses under the floors. There are ancient gold workings all round it. It is said to be an astronomical temple, as well as the site of a great mining town. Do you know much about astronomy?"

"No. I know Sirius."

"I know Sirius. Can you see him?"

"I can't see it from here. Perhaps it isn't visible."

" It seems to me to be clouding up. Listen."

" Is that a lion roaring ? "

" Jump out a minute." Lionel was turned out, standing at the door of the tent.

" What's the matter ? " Roger asked.

" A thunderstorm," said Lionel. " Get on your things. I prepared for this. Wrap that tarpaulin round you, and come on out. Don't wait. Come on."

Outside in the night the heavens were fast darkening under a whirling purplish cloud. From time to time the expanse of cloud glimmered into a livid reddish colour with the passage of lightning. It was as though the whole lower heaven lightened. Thunder was rolling. Great burning streaks tore the sky across, loosing thunder and flame. Roger saw the bearers moving from their fire to the shelter of the lee of the ruins. A faint sultry blast fanned against his face, bringing that smell of death to him. He turned away, choking. " Get away from the tent," Lionel shouted in his ear, over the roar of the thunder. " Tie this rope round me. It's going to be bad. Get under the lee of the wall there. Run." They hurried to the shelter, on the tottering legs of those who have just recovered from fever. As they ran, Roger trod on something rope-like and moving, which (squirming round) struck his boot with a sharp tap.

" There's a snake," he cried, giving a jump.

" Did he get you ? "

" No. Only my boot."

" Lucky for you. There may be death-adders here. Rattle with your feet. Here we are. This will do."

There came a sharp pattering of heavy raindrops, which beat the ground like shot falling on to tin. In the glimmer of a long flash, which burnt for a full ten seconds, Roger saw Lionel probing the ground for snakes with an outstretched foot. He was hooded and cowled with tarpaulin from the boat. He was scratching a match, sleepy with heat-damp, to get a light for a cigarette. The match flared, putting the face in strong colour below the shade of the cowl. The sky was being charged by a dark host. There came a sort of elemental sighing, as the obscuring of the vertical stars began. Out of the whole air came the sighing. It was a noise like waterfalls and pine forests. Then with a shattering crash the storm burst. The whole sky broke into a blaze, as though a vast bath of fire had suddenly been hurled over. There was a roaring as of the earth being split. After an instant's pause, there came an explosion so terrific that the two men huddled up together instinctively. It grew colder on the instant. It grew icy cold. The tent stood out clearly, in every detail, for a few bright seconds. Then the rain poured down, as though the bottom of the sky had broken. The next flash shewed only a streaming greyness of water, pouring down, with a weight and force new to Roger. It was a blinding rain, one could not face it. It made the world one grey torrent. It made the earth paste beneath the feet. Brooks were rushing down the hill within half a minute of its beginning. The flashes and thundering never ceased. Crouching up to the wall, Roger could only gulp air that was half water. The force of the storm staggered him. The fury

of the thunder daunted him. The splendour of the lightning was so ghastly that at each blast he bent back against the wall. A tree was struck on the wall above him. He expected to be struck at each flash. There was no question of bravery. The racket and the glare were worse than the fiercest shell-fire. The lightning seemed to run across the sky and along the ground, and out of the ground. One smelt it. It had the smell of something burning; some metal.

The next instant he was digging his fingers into the crenellations to save himself from being blown away. The wind came swooping down with a rush which beat the breath out of him. For one second the rain seemed to pause. It was merely changing its direction to the horizontal. The air seemed to be no longer present. There was nothing but a rushing, stinging, blinding torrent of water. After the wind began, Roger was not properly conscious of anything. He stood backed up to the wall, with his eyes and mouth tight shut, his ears buffeted and streaming, his nose wrinkled by the effort to keep his eyes shut. Across his eyelids he sensed the glimmer of the lightning, now blinding, now merely vivid. Everything else was leaping, howling uproar, driving wet, driving cold, dominated by the explosions aloft. All confusion was let loose to feed the fear of death in him. So they stood shoulder to shoulder, for something like an hour, when a change came.

The wind died away, after blowing its fiercest. The rain stopped. The livid glimmering of the lightning passed off into the distance. The stars

came out. Roger squelched about in the mud, trying to get some sensation into his freezing feet. Lionel's teeth were chattering. Lionel with numbed fingers was trying to light a sopping match for the sodden cigarette already between his lips.

"Pretty bad one," said Lionel. "The tent's gone."

"It will be dawn soon," said Roger, looking at the wreck of the tent. "It's over now." He shivered.

"Not yet," said Lionel. "That's only half of it. There's the other half to come yet. I wonder how the bearers took it."

"I'll go and see," said Roger.

"Stay where you are," said Lionel. "You won't have time." The moon shewed for a brief moment —a sickly moon already threatened by scud. The clouds were rolling up again.

"This will be in our faces," said Lionel, raising his voice. "These are circular storms." The wind was muttering far off. All the earth was filled with a gloomy murmur. "Let's get into the wreck of the tent," Lionel added in a shout. "Into the wreck of the tent. We may die of cold if we don't." They hove up the heavy canvas so that they might creep within, under the folds. They cowered there close together, waiting, chilled to the bone.

"It's jolly cold," said Roger, with chattering teeth.

"Yes," said Lionel. "I've known a man die in one of these. Hold tight. Here it comes."

It came with such a shock of thunder and fire of lightning that they both started. They felt the

folds of the tent surge and lift above them as the wind beat upon it. Some flap had blown loose. It flogged at Roger like a bar of hard wood. He understood then what sailors meant by wind. He felt a sort of exultation for a moment. Then one terrible blast flung him on his side, and rolled a great weight of wet canvas on him. He felt it quiver and hesitate. The wind seemed to be heaving and heaving, with multitudinous little howling devils. They were heaving up and heaving under. The whole mass hesitated. He was moved, he was swayed. He felt the fabric pause and totter upward and sink down. "We're going," he muttered, gulping. Afterwards, he maintained that nothing but the weight of the rain kept him from being blown away. Water was gurgling in the ground beneath him. Water was running up his sleeves, and down his neck. Water spouted on him as he beat away the folds to get air. A grand and ghastly fire was running across heaven. Shocks were striking the earth all round him. Another tree was blasted. Thunder broke out above in a long rippling crescendo of splitting cracks. That, and the pouring of a cataract into his face made him draw back the fold. He cowered. He had lost touch with Lionel. He did not know where Lionel was. His foot struck something hard. Groping down, hungry for companionship, he found that it was the broken tent-pole. Another gust lifted him. It gathered strength. It swept the folds from his hands and sent the edge flogging, flogging, flogging, with its lashes of rope and tent-pegs. The full fury of the storm was on him. The

tent was bundling itself up into ruin against the boxes. He was sitting in wet mud assailed by every devil of bad weather. Lionel was by his side shouting into his ear. "Don't stand," came the far-away voice. "Get struck." He nodded when next the flames ran round. It seemed likely that he would be struck. It was a quick death, so people said. He found himself saying aloud that it would be terrible if Lionel were struck. What then? What would he do then? He craned round into the beating rain to try to get a glimpse of the bearers. He could see nothing but rain and that reddish running glimmer of living light.

He did not feel much. He was too cold, too weak, too frightened. If he had been able to define his feelings he would have said that he was thinking it impossible that he could ever have been dry, or warm, or happy. His old life was a far-off inconceivable dream. That he had ever sat by a fire seemed inconceivable. That there was such a thing as a sun seemed inconceivable. That life could be dignified, tender, or heroic seemed inconceivable. "If this isn't misery," he muttered, shaking, "I don't know what is. I don't know what is." He felt suddenly that water was running under him in a good strong stream, several inches deep. Putting his hand down, it slopped up to the wrist in a current. He groped with his hand. As he put it down some beetle in the water pinched him briskly, turning him sick for a moment with the memory of the snake which had struck his boot. Standing up hurriedly, the water rose above his boots. Looking up, an opening in the clouds shewed him the moon,

a beaten swimmer in a mill-race. The storm was breaking.

Not long after that it broke. The stars came out. The wind ceased from her whirling about continually. She blew steady, in a brisk fresh gale, bringing up the clearing showers. The showers would have seemed torrents at other times, but to Roger, now, they were little drizzles. Lionel and he found a sort of cave in the tent. Part of the canvas had wedged itself under the pole. The rest had then blown across a pile of boxes on to the wall. Being supported now by those two uprights it roofed in a narrow shelter about five feet long. They crept into this shelter, dead beat from the cold. For a while they sat crouched close together, with chattering teeth. Then they drew a few folds of the canvas over them and lay still, trying to get warmth and sleep. They were not very sure that they would live to see the dawn. Roger thought vaguely of the bearers. He wondered what they had done, prompted by their knowledge of these storms. A dull, heavy, steady roaring noise seemed to be coming from the river. He wondered if the water had risen much, after all that torrential rain. Thinking vaguely of a flood, he wondered if the boat were safe. It seemed a long, long time since they had left the boat. He must have left the boat in some other life. The sun had been shining, he had been hot, he had passed through a glorious landscape. He had seen the peacocks of the Queen of Sheba jetting among flowers which were like burning precious stones. That was long ago. That was over for ever. But yet he wondered

vaguely about the boat. Was it safe, there in the broad ?

" Lionel," he said gently. " Can you sleep ? "

" No. We shall get warm presently."

" It's jolly wretched."

" It'll be all right when we get warm. Don't let's talk."

" Is the boat all right, do you think ? The water is roaring in the river."

" The boat ? I can't think about the boat. She was moored or something." Their teeth chattered again for some little time. Presently, as they lay there shivering, they felt the uneasy aching warmth which sometimes comes to those who sleep in wet clothes. It is much such an unpleasant heat as wet grass generates in a rick. There is cramp and pain in it. The muscles rise up into little knots and bunch themselves. Still, it is heat of a kind. They lay awake, rubbing their contorted muscles, until, a little before the dawn, they were warm enough to doze. They dozed off, then, waking up, from time to time, generally once in ten minutes, to turn uneasily, so that the aching muscles might cease to twist into little knots and bunches.

IX

Where be these cannibals, these varlets?
The Shoemaker's Holiday.

THE rain ceased before dawn. When the two friends felt strong enough to turn out, the sun was already burning. It was after half-past seven o'clock. The brooks which had washed past them and over them, only three or four hours before, were no longer running. Their tracks were marked on the hillside, in broad, shallow, muddy ruts, and in paths of plastered grass. The river had been over its banks not long before. It was swirling along now, brimful, as red as water from an ironworks. Roger remembered the water running by a road near Portobe, from some ironworks up the hill. It was just that savage colour. He felt a qualm of home-sickness. He turned to blink at the sun for the pleasure of the warmth upon his face.

The camp was a quag of mud. Red splashes plastered the boxes. The tent was half-buried in it. His clothes, and the covering tarpaulin, were smeared with it. He felt that it had been worked, not only into his skin, but into his nature. He had never before known what it is to be really dirty, nor what continued dirt may mean to the character. The site of the camp was trodden and spattered and beslimed, yet the brightness of the morning made it hard for him to believe that such a storm

had passed over him only a little while before. He noticed the trees which had been blasted by the lightning. It had not all been a nightmare.

Up the hill, beyond three small circling walls, no taller than the wall beside him, rose up the great central walls. They stood out clearly in the strong light. They were good, well-built walls, with crenellated courses near the top, in the right artistic place, in the inevitable place. The crenellations shewed Roger that he was not widely removed from the builders, in spirit. They talked the universal language of art. But they were more than talkers, these old men. Their work was splendid. It had style. It had the impress of will upon it. The idea had been thought out to its simplest terms. The walls were solid with that simple strength which the efficient nations of antiquity, not yet corrupted by sentiment, affected, in public building. Though they were not like Roman work, they reminded Roger of walls at Richborough and Caerwent. There was something of the same pagan spirit in them, something strong, and fine, and uncanny. Even with the flowering shrubs and grass clumps on them, these walls were uncanny. He shivered a little. The lonely hill had once been a city, where strong, fine, uncanny brains had lived.

Lionel crawled out. "Where's Merrylegs?" he asked. "Why haven't they brought our tea?"

Roger started. Where were the bearers? He had not seen them since he had noticed them go to cover before the bursting of the storm. They had gone. They had not come back. They had not

even lighted a fire. "I don't know where they are," he said. "Where can they be?"

"Haven't you seen them?" said Lionel.

"No," he answered. "They're not here. Merrylegs!" he shouted. "Merrylegs!" No answer came.

Lionel's face changed slightly. He jumped on to the low wall, and looked downhill towards the village. The view over that waste of pale grass, through which the river ran, was very splendid; but Lionel was not looking for landscape. "Give me the glasses," he said. He stared through them for several minutes, sweeping the plain. "Run up into the ruins, Roger," said Lionel. "They may be there."

"Wait one minute," said Roger. "There is smoke in the village. That is too big a fire for the people whom I saw there to have made."

"Wet wood," said Lionel promptly. "Come on. We must get these boys into order."

They hurried up the hill, calling for Merrylegs. After a couple of minutes Roger stopped. "Lionel," he said. "During the storm, or just before it, I saw them go to shelter under the lee of the wall there. Their tracks will be in the mud. We could follow them up in that way."

"Yes," said Lionel. "They're not up here, anyhow."

After some little search, they found where the bearers had sheltered before the storm threatened. A vulture shewed them the exact place. Two other vultures were there already. The storm had killed one of the men.

"It's Rukwo, the lazy one," said Lionel. "I

noticed last night that there was something the matter with him. Perhaps you saw how the others fought shy of him. These fellows are like animals, aren't they, in the way they leave their sick?" He looked at the body. "Dysentery and the cold, I suppose," he said. "With Kilemba dead last night, the village full of dead down below us, the storm, then this fellow dying, it has been too much for them. I'm afraid, Roger, that the men have deserted us."

"Gone?" said Roger blankly. It had not occurred to him before as a possibility.

"I'm afraid," said Lionel, moving away. "Here is where they sheltered for the storm. There are their tracks leading downhill. You see? Here. See? Still half full of water. They cleared out in the night during the showers. They've got three or four hours' start of us."

"Well," said Roger. "Come on. We'd better eat as we go. Otherwise we may never catch them up."

"They'll have gone in the boat," said Lionel. "With this flood they'll be a day's march downstream. There's no trace of the boat in the lagoon there."

"She may have been swept away," said Roger, after a glance through the glasses. "The stores are there still." By this time they were hurrying downhill towards the village. Both were thinking how fiercely they would thrash Merrylegs and how little chance there was of finding any Merrylegs to thrash. Anger burned up in hot bursts, and the cold water of despair put it out again. Roger felt

it more keenly than Lionel. He was less used to the shocks of travel. He wondered, as he hurried, what stores had been left in the boat, and what had been piled on the bank to be carried up next day. He had been ill; he had never noticed. The men had done as they pleased. He reproached himself so bitterly that he hardly dared look at his friend. He wondered whether the men had taken anything of supreme importance. He feared the worst. If they had taken anything important he would be to blame. It was his fault. He ought to have guarded against this. He ought to have taken the paddles. He ought to have ordered the men to bring everything up to camp, where it would have been under his own eyes. Lionel looked at him quizzically.

"Don't cross the river till you reach the water," he said. "We may catch them. They may not have gone."

On their way they looked through the village. The bearers were not there. Lionel tried to make the villagers understand him by signs; but they were too strongly infected to understand a difficult thing. He had to give them up. He bade Roger fill his pockets with some bruised corn which they found in one of the pots of an empty hut. They munched this as they went. Their next task was to run out the trail.

By the village drinking-place the river had overflowed the bank. It had torn up a couple of trees, which now lay branches downward in the water, arresting wreckage. It had surged strongly against the boxes, driving them from their place, but not

destroying them. It had heaped them with drift, and coloured them a yellowish red. The foot-marks of the bearers were thickly printed in the mud there. They must have arrived there in the early morning, when the waters were beginning to fall.

"They've been busy," said Roger. All the boxes had been broken open. Their contents were tumbled in the mud in all directions.

"Look here," said Lionel. "What do you make of these marks?" In one place the mud had been planed smooth in a long plastering smear, ending in a notch or narrow groove.

"That was made by the boat," said Roger.

"Yes," said Lionel. "That was the boat. You can see the puncture in the mud there. That was made by the projecting screw in the false nose. You remember the screw we put in at Malakoto? They shoved off here."

"Yes. No doubt. That is the screw. So they've sampled the goods and gone."

"That is so. They've robbed us and run away."

"And we are stranded in the heart of the wilderness?"

"We are alone, three hundred miles from any white man."

"Yes. Then we are alone," said Roger. "We are alone here." The words thrilled him. They were meaning words.

"We can't go after them," said Lionel. "They've got too big a start."

"We've got no boat to go in."

"I wish," said Lionel, "I wish these riverine negroes used canoes."

"They don't."

"No," said Lionel. "They don't. Well. It's no good moping."

"We could follow downstream," said Roger, "and perhaps catch them at Malakoto."

Lionel shook his head. "There are the swamps," he said. "And we've both got fever on us. I doubt if we could get through. We might."

"We shall have to try it in the end, if we are to get away at all."

"I was thinking that," said Lionel. "But when we try it, it will be the end of the dry season, when the swamps will be passable. The swamps now are as bad as they can be. Honestly, Roger, I don't think we could make Malakoto, carrying our own stores. It's ten days; and those others wouldn't stay at Malakoto, remember. They'd make for Kisa. No. Best give in. They've won the trick."

"And we're to lose all these stores; about a hundred pounds' worth of stores?"

"That's the minimum, I'm afraid."

"It's a bad beginning," said Roger. He walked to and fro, fretting. "Doesn't it make your blood boil?" he continued. "Look at the way the brutes have tossed the things about. I'd give a good deal to have a few of them here."

Lionel sat down on a box and stared meditatively at the wreck. "Roger," he said at length. "Have you any idea what stores were brought up the hill last night?"

"Mostly the bow-stores, I suppose; provisions, bedding, and camp gear."

"That's what I was afraid," said Lionel.

"What are you afraid of?"

"Come on. Let's face it," said Lionel, springing from his perch. "We must get these things out of the mud. We must see how we stand."

"You mean we may be—— What do you mean?"

"We must see what stores are left to us."

They set to work together to pick up the wreck. They began with cartridges, which had been scattered broadcast in wantonness. Many were spoiled; many missing. Marks on the grass shewed that others had been carefully emptied, so that the thieves might have the brass shells enclosing the charges. Still, a good many were to be found. The two men recovered about fifty rounds of Winchester, and eighty rounds of revolver ammunition. With what they wore in their belts this amount was reassuring.

"Look here," said Roger. "Here's a box of slides. They're all smashed."

"Was the microscope not brought up?"

"I don't know," said Roger. "It was in a box with a blue stencil."

"I know," said Lionel. "I've been looking out for it. I thought it wasn't here. Look. Over there. There's part of a lid with a blue stencil. Is that the lid for the microscope?"

"No, that's a drugs lid."

"They can't have taken it with them. Surely they wouldn't take a microscope."

"It might be up in the camp all this time."

"Yes. True. Wait. We'll get these things out of the mud, and then we'll go up the hill, and make a list of what is missing. Here's our stationery ruined. All our nice clean temperature charts that I set such store by. I told you life was wasteful out here. All your pressed plants are done for."

"Here are clothes, of sorts. Jaeger underwear."

"Fish them out. We'll wash them afterwards."

They quartered the expanse of red slime. It was a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground, littered with European goods. They worked quickly, racing the sun. From time to time there came hails of "The tool-chest's gone. Here's the lid." "Your small stores won't be much good, the soap's melted or something." "Look at what these brutes have done to the sugar."

Presently Lionel hailed.

"I say. I say. Have you come across any drugs?"

"No. Only the lid of a drugs box."

"Well. It's getting serious. There's no other box here. We must go on back to camp and find out if they are there."

"We shall be done, without drugs," said Roger.

"Don't talk about it, my dear man," said Lionel. "Don't talk about it."

"It would be worth while making a raft," said Roger. "There are a couple of axes in camp. If we worked hard all morning, we could get a sort of a raft built. We could use the tent-ropes

"Plenty of disease here," said Roger.

"All preventable," said Lionel. "Only we're not allowed to prevent it. People here would rather have it by them to reform. Science won't mix with sentiment, thank God!" They entered Simpson's.

In the camp things were as they had been, except that they were drier. They turned over the boxes, looking eagerly for blue stencil.

"Here's the microscope," said Roger. "Or I think it is." He prized the case open with the jemmy on the end of the peg-maul. "Yes. The microscope's all right. Some of our test-tube things are smashed. Some of the media. There are plenty of those, though, down in the mud. That's one thing to the good. What's in the case there?"

"Anti-scorbutics here."

"And in the long box?"

"Grub of different kinds."

"Here you are, then. Here's a drugs case."

"Saved!"

"Shall I open it?"

"Yes, open it. We did a very foolish thing, Roger. We ought to have packed each box as a miniature equipment, so as to minimize the importance of any losses. It's in my mind that all our atoxyl is in one case."

"No," said Roger. "It was in three cases. One of them, I know, was in the boat. I was sitting on it most of yesterday."

"Well. Open that one, and let's see where we stand."

The well-fixed screws were drawn. The box lay open to the sun, exuding a faint, cleanly smell of camphor.

Lionel looked over the drug pots, muttering the names: "Mercury bi-chlor, sodium carb, sodium chlor, sodium cit, corrosive sublimate, quinine,

quinine, quinine, potassium bromide—we shan't want much of that—absolute alcohol, carbolic, first-aid dressings, chlorodyne, morphia, camphorated chalk for the teeth, what's this?—digitalis. What the devil did they send that for? There's no atoxyl here."

"Nor that other stuff, the dye, trypanroth?"

"No. We didn't order any. It wasn't altogether a success with me, and it wasn't being so well spoken of."

"That's unfortunate. But wait a minute. I see another drug case. Over there, against the wall. Isn't that a drug case?"

"It is. Chuck the jemmy over." He did not wait to draw the screws. He prized the lid off with two quick wrenches of the jemmy. He looked inside.

"A quaker," he said grimly, after one look. "It's a quaker case."

"What's a quaker?"

"This case here is what we call a quaker. Why? Because it makes one quake. Look at these bottles. They're full of paper and sawdust. Look at this one. Old rags. Here's a 2-lb. atoxyl bottle, for which we paid twenty-eight pounds, not to speak of the duty. It's full of dust like the rest.

"But, good Lord, Lionel! Where could it have been done? Who could have done it? We got these direct from the very best London house."

"There were rats on the way," said Lionel. "You remember we stopped off a day at that place Kwasi Bembo, where we hired Merrylegs? Well. This was probably done at Kwasi Bembo, by one

of those foreign storekeepers. An easy way of making money for them."

"I don't see how he did it."

"Oh, he could have done it easily enough, while we were having our siestas. It doesn't matter much, though, where it was done, does it?"

"Don't despair yet," said Roger. "There must be another box somewhere. Here. Open this one. The stencil is ground off. What's inside this one?"

"It looks promising," said Lionel. "It's screwed; it isn't nailed. Off, now." He thrust the lid away with a violent heave. Roger peered in anxiously.

"Nothing but stones in this one," said Lionel. "Not even our bottles left. We'd better open all our cases, and find out what else has been taken. I suppose that's our last box of chemicals?"

"It's the last here."

"Never mind," said Roger. "We won't despair. Let's see what is left to us." They examined the other cases. They made out an inventory of their possessions. They learned that they were left in the heart of Africa with provisions for three months, forty pounds' weight of anti-scorbutics, a quantity of clothing, a moderate supply of ammunition, two rifles, two revolvers, a shot-gun, many disinfectants, an assortment of choice drugs, some medical instruments, and a microscope. Of medical comforts they had sparklets, tobacco, soap, matches, and two bottles of brandy. Of quaker cases they found, in all, five, all of them purporting to be either chemicals or cartridges. Of utensils

they had a tin basin, plates, and pannikins. For shelter they had a tent with a broken pole.

"Lionel," said Roger, when they had checked their list. "Look here. We've been up here a good hour and a half. The water will have fallen a foot or more. By the time we have cooked and eaten breakfast it will have fallen another foot. It is quite possible that by that time there will be some more goods, perhaps, even, some more cases, left high and dry on the bank. We won't worry about our loss till we know it. If we breakfast now we shall be strong enough to bear whatever may be coming to us. Let's get a fire started. We'll brew some tea and sacrifice a tin of soup. Let's be extravagant and enjoy ourselves."

They were sufficiently extravagant over breakfast, but they got little enjoyment out of it. They had rankling anger in them, against their enemies, known and unknown. When their anger gave them leave, they felt, low down, a chilling, sinking fear that their plans for the saving of life would come to nothing, that, in short, their expedition was a failure.

"Lionel," said Roger. "Do you think that the fraud of the atoxyl was done in London? Surely Morris and Henslow wouldn't do a thing like that?"

"Who knows what they won't do?" said Lionel gloomily. "I know that some contractor or other always supplies shoddy of some kind to an expedition to one of the Poles. Why not to us? There is always the chance that the expedition won't return. And even if it does return, the fraud is quite likely not to become known to the

public. And even if the case comes on in a law court, who can prove it? There are too many loopholes. It is almost impossible to bring the guilt really home. The contractor practically never gets found out. As for a contractor being punished, I don't suppose it has ever happened. It makes one believe in hell."

"It's not the crime itself," said Roger. "Not knowing the criminal, I cannot judge the crime; but it's the state of mind which sickens me. The state of mind which could prompt such a thing."

"It's a common enough state of mind," said Lionel. "In business it's common enough. Business men, even of good standing, will do queer things when the shoe begins to pinch. You may say what you like about war. Business is the real curse of a nation. Business, and the business brain, and, oh, my God, the business man! Swine. Fatted, vulpine swine."

"Well," said Roger. "It is very important not to take these things into the mind, even to condemn them."

"And I say it is nothing of the sort," said Lionel. "I believe in strangling ideas as I believe in strangling people. You writers, when you are really good at your job, don't condemn half enough.'

"Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner."

"Intellectually, not morally. Come on. We are not going to argue. We are going to work. We've got to bury that bearer. Where's the spade?"

They dug a grave for Rukwo, and buried him, and heaped a cairn of stones from the wall on top

of him. It was burning midday when they had finished. They had leisure then to think again of the loss of their atoxyl.

"We may not have any at all?" said Roger. Lionel produced a small screw-top bottle from his pocket. It had once contained tabloids of anti-pyrin. It was now about half full of a white powder.

"I've a few doses here," he said. He looked at it carefully. "With luck," he said, "we could cure two or three cases with this."

"But suppose you have a relapse yourself, Lionel? You must keep some, in case you should relapse."

"I shan't relapse," he said carelessly. "Relapses aren't common."

"But you might. And you are more important than a village-full of negroes. More important than all the blacks put together and multiplied by ten."

"I don't see it. Look here. I tell you one thing which is pretty plain to me. We've got to set to work to find an anti-toxin. First, though, we'll go down and grope in the mud for anything which may be left. I don't give up hope of finding some atoxyl even now."

They told each other as they went that they didn't expect to find anything. Really their hearts beat high with expectation. They were sure of finding what they sought.

They went down to the mud so sure that their disappointment almost unmanned them. For they were disappointed. An hour of broiling work

only added two cartridges to their store. Out in the river, caught in a snag with other drift, they saw a floating packing-case, marked with a blue stencil. By the manner of its floating they judged it to be empty, or nearly empty. It had probably floated off shortly after being opened. It had then caught in a snag. It had then ducked and sidled to get away. Lastly, it had turned upside down and emptied its contents into the river. So they judged the tragedy, viewing the victim through their glasses, from a distance of a hundred yards.

"That settles it, I think," said Lionel. A projecting snout rose at the box, tilting it over. It fell back, lipping under, so that it filled. In another instant it was gone from sight. The glasses shewed a slight swirl in the water. The swirl passed at once, under the drive of the spate. Their last hope of atoxyl was at an end.

"Well," said Roger hopelessly. "It's as well to know the worst. The box was empty, don't you think?"

"I don't know," said Lionel. "I couldn't be sure."

"We might find some things in the water when the river sinks a little further," said Roger, without much conviction. "It'll be drying up very soon now. Then we shall find whatever is in it."

Lionel sat down despondently, resting his chin on one hand. He was letting his disappointment work itself off silently. His heart had been set so long on this first great medical field-day that he could not look Roger in the face. The loss of the atoxyl was less hard to bear than the loss of all the

interesting cases over which he would have been bending at that minute had this ghastly thing not happened. And, being an old campaigner, and therefore forethoughtful, it was bitter to him to find himself thwarted unexpectedly by a trick so simple. He had thought that he had guarded against all the known dodges. He had been on his guard all through. In London he had sampled the food, the clothes, the cartridges, rejecting everything which seemed even faulty. He had been surprised at his own strictness. All the way up from the coast he had watched his stores so jealously that he had thought himself safe. He had been vain of his success. He had never lost so little in any previous expedition. Now an attack of fever, a storm, and a bearer's sudden death had let him in for this. He was not forgetting the chemist's share. He cursed himself for having trusted the chemist. Then he decided that it was not the chemist. The fraud had been committed in Africa. He had not been careful enough. He himself was to blame. "Guns and grub I could understand," he cried. "But for them to take drugs! Who would have thought of their taking drugs? Why didn't I see that Africa is getting civilized? Roger, I want to kill somebody."

"It's my turn to lecture now," said Roger. "We'll carry these things up to camp. I've an idea about camp."

"What is your idea?"

"To build a house out of the loose stones of the wall. We could use the wall itself for one wall, build up three others and roof it with the

tent. It would be better than having another night like last night."

"It might be done," said Lionel, mechanically filling his pockets with cartridges. "But I don't know what good we're going to do here if we haven't any atoxyl. I wish I knew who it was. If ever I touch at Kwasi Bembo again, I'll have that atoxyl out of his liver."

They passed a broiling afternoon carrying their gear to camp. They became irritable at about four o'clock. After that time they worked apart, avoiding each other. At six Roger made tea, over which they made friends. At seven they set about the building of their house. They laboured by moonlight far into the night, laying the mortarless stones together. When they knocked off for bed it was nearly midnight, and the house was far from perfect. They could not do more to it. They were too tired. After flogging their blankets against the walls to get rid of mud and "bichos," they turned in, bone-weary, and slept the stupid sleep of sailors for nearly eleven hours.

They finished their house in the afternoon. It was not a very good house, but they judged that it would be safer and drier than their tent had proved. After they had finished it, they felt it to be structurally weak. They went at it again. They strengthened the roof with saplings, and laid great stones upon the edges of the canvas cover, so that it should not blow from its place. With great cunning Roger arranged an outer roof of a rough thatch which he himself made from the osiers used by the natives. He thought that a

double roof would be cooler. He explained to Lionel an ambitious scheme for a thatched verandah; but this had to be abandoned from want of encouragement. Inside, the house was about twelve feet square. When the two beds, the table, the chairs, and the boxes were all within doors, it seemed very cramped and poky. They were in some doubt about a name for it. Lionel was for "Phœnician Villa," Roger for "The Laurels" or "Oak Drive." Finally they decided on "Portobe," which they smeared over the door in blacking. They had not thought much of Portobe on their way up country. Portobe. Roger going out that night, after supper, to wash the plates in a bucket, sat by the fire for many minutes, "thinking long" about Portobe. Something made him turn his head, and look out into the night north-north-westward,

> for there dwelt love, and all love's loving parts,
> And all the friends.

It was a dim expanse, mothlike and silver in the moonlight, reaching on in forest and river to the desert. To reach Portobe he would have to go beyond the desert, over the sea, over Spain, over France. He paused. He was not sure whether France would be in the direct line. If it were not, then there would only be the sea to cross, past Land's End, past Carnsore, past Braichy, past all the headlands. Then on to the Waters of Moyle, which never cease to call to the heart who hears them. He remembered the poem of the calling of the Waters of Moyle. He knew it by heart.

It was a true poem. The vastness and silence of the night were over him. The great stars burned out above. They seemed to wheel and deploy above him, rank upon rank, helm on gleaming helm, an army, a power. There were no birds, no noise of beasts, no lights. Only the earth, strange in the moon; the great continent, measureless in her excess. She was all savage, all untamed, a black and cruel continent, a lustful old queen, smeared with bloody oils. She frightened him. He thought of one night at Portobe three years before, when he had come out "to look at the night" with Ottalie. He could still see some of the stars seen then. He could still, in the sharpened fancy of the home-sick, smell the spray of honeysuckle which had gone trailing and trailing, drenching wet, across the little-used iron gate which led to the beach. He longed to be going up the beach, up the loaning overhung with old willows, as he had gone that night with Ottalie. He longed to be going through the little town, past the fruitman's, past the butcher's, past the R.I.C. barracks, to the little churchyard by the stream. Ottalie lay there. Here he was in Africa, trying to do something for Ottalie's sake. He drew in his breath sharply. It was all useless. It was not going to be done. The atoxyl was lost. They might just as well have stayed in England. He sighed. To do something very difficult, which would tax all his powers, that was his task. When that was done he would feel that he had won his bride. A strange, choking voice came from the house.

"Roger! Roger! Come in. Where are you?" Lionel had been asleep in his chair.

"What is it? What is it?" said Roger.

"Nothing. Nothing," said Lionel. "I dreamed I was fast by the leg. You don't know how beastly it was."

X

A cold shivering, methinks.
Every Man out of his Humour.

What would you minister upon the sudden?
Monsieur Thomas.

THE next day they walked to the village, prepared for an unpleasant morning. They buried seven bodies and burned eleven huts. Several times, during the day, they noticed tsetses at rest on the framework of the huts.

"They have followed people up from the water," said Lionel. "They don't attack us, because we are wearing white duck. They don't like white."

"Flies have an uncanny knowledge," said Roger. "How do they get their knowledge? Is it mere inherited instinct? I notice that they always attack in the least protected spots. How do they know that a man cannot easily drive them from between his shoulders? They do know. I notice they nearly always attack between the shoulders."

"Yes. And dogs on the head, cattle on the shoulders, and horses on the belly and forelegs. They're subtle little devils."

"And they have apparently no place in the scheme of the world, except to transplant the trypanosome from where he is harmless to where he is deadly."

"Lots of men are like that," said Lionel. "You can go along any London street and see thousands of them outside those disgusting pot-houses. Men

with no place in the scheme of the world, except to transplant intoxicants from the casks, where they are harmless, to their insides, where they become deadly, both to themselves and to society. Any self-respecting State would drown the brutes in their own beer. Yet the brutes don't get drowned. And as they do not, there must be a scientific reason. Either the State must be so rotten that the germs are neutralized by other germs, or the germs must have some dim sort of efficiency for life, just as the tsetses have. They have the tenacity of the very low organism. It is one of the mysteries of life to me that a man tends to lose that tenacity and efficiency for life as soon as he becomes sufficiently subtle and fine to be really worth having in the world. I like Shakespeare because he is one of the very few men who realized that. He is harping on it again and again. He is at it in *Hamlet*, in *Richard the Second*, in *Brutus*, *Othello*. Oh, in lots of the plays, in the minor characters, too, like Malvolio; even in Aguecheek. And people call that disgusting, beefy brute, Prince Henry, 'Shakespeare's one hero,' a 'vision of ideal English manhood.' Shakespeare's one hero! Shakespeare wrote him with his tongue in his cheek, and used an ounce of civet afterwards."

They turned again to their work. After changing their clothes, bathing antiseptically, and anointing their hands with corrosive sublimate solution and alcohol, they began solemnly to distil some water for their tiny store of atoxyl.

"Lionel," said Roger, "we've got enough drug to cure two, or perhaps three of these people. We

ought not to use it all. We are away in the wilds here. Save one dose at least for yourself in case you should get a relapse. You know how very virulent a relapsed case is."

"I know," said Lionel. "But that is part of the day's work. Our only chance of doing good here is to find an anti-toxin. I want this spare atoxyl for that."

"But," said Roger, "you cannot make an effective serum from the blood of a man in whom atoxyl is at work. Surely atoxyl only stimulates the phagocytes to eat the trypanosome."

"Quite so," said Lionel. "You're a serumite, I'm not. I am not at all keen on the use of serum for this complaint. I believe that the cure (if there is one) will be got by injecting the patient with dead trypanosomes or very, very weak ones. I'm going to make a special artificial culture of trypanosomes in culture tubes. I shall then weaken the germs with atoxyl. When they are all bloated and paralysed, I shall inject them. I believe that that injection, or the injection of quite dead trypanosomes, will have permanent good effects."

"And I," rejoined Roger, "believe that your methods will be useless. I believe that the cure (if there be a cure) will be obtained by the use of sera obtained from naturally or artificially immunized animals."

"That's just the taking kind of fairy story you would believe. You're a sentimentalist."

"Very well. But listen. It is said that when the dogs of the bushmen are reared entirely on the meat of immune game, they become immune like

the game; but that if they are not used to wild meat they develop nagana from eating it casually."

"I don't believe the first part of that," said Lionel. "It sounds too like a yarn. The dogs which are reared entirely on wild game are probably naturally immune native dogs, bred originally from some wild strain, like the wild hunting-dogs."

"But there is no doubt that wild game, like wildebeests, koodoos, hyenas, and quaggas, are immune?"

"None whatever."

"Then could not some preparation be made from the blood of the wild game? Surely one could extract the immunizing principle from the immune creature, and use that as a serum?"

"We don't even know what the 'immunizing principle' may be: so how can we extract it?"

"Well, then. Use the blood serum by itself."

"But, my dear man, the blood of these beasts is the favourite haunt of the trypanosome."

They argued it to and fro with the pertinacity of enthusiasts improperly equipped with knowledge. Roger fought for his "fairy story," Lionel for his dead and dying cultures. At last Lionel finished the preparation of the mixture.

"Look here," he said. "This atoxyl, you say, is to be kept? Well. If I get a relapse before it is used, you will please remember that it is to be used to paralyse artificially-raised trypanosomes, which will afterwards be injected into me. You will try none of your sera on me, my friend. If you like to go getting sera from dying, dirty, anthraxy wild beasts, do so; but don't put any of the poison, so

got, into me. I see you so plainly strangling a deer in a mud-wallow, and drawing off the blood into a methylated spirits can. Here's the mixture ready. And now that our water of life is ready for use, comes the great question: Which of all these sleepers is to live? Here are twenty-nine men, women, and children. They are all condemned to die within a few weeks. Now then, Roger. You are a writer, that is to say a law-giver, a disposer and settler of moral issues. Which of these is to live? We can say thumbs down to any we choose. If we live to be a hundred we shall probably never have to make such a solemn choice again."

"It isn't certain life," said Roger, hesitating for a moment, staggered by the responsibility. "Atoxyl isn't a certain cure, even of moderate cases."

"It's a practically certain cure if the patient is all right in other ways; that is, of course, if the case has not gone too far."

"What is the percentage of deaths?" said Roger.

"With atoxyl?"

"Yes."

"Eight per cent for slight cases, and twenty-two per cent for bad ones. Without atoxyl, it's a certain hundred per cent."

"I see."

"It's a good drug."

"Yes," said Roger. "It's a good drug. But look at them, Lionel. To stand here and choose them out."

"We are doing now what the scientist will one day do for every human race," said Lionel.

"We are choosing for the future. As it happens we are choosing for the future of a fraction of a wretched little African tribe. The scientist will one day choose, just as finally, for the future of man. I didn't think you'd baulk, Roger. This is the beginning of the golden age. 'The golden age begins anew.' Here are the wise men choosing who are to inherit the earth."

A sleepy negro came unsteadily from a hut. He walked, as though not quite in control of his actions, towards the wise men. He was a fine, supple creature, dressed in crocodile's teeth. Parts of him shone with an anointment of oil. He drew up, dully staring. His jaw was hanging. Flies settled on his body. A tsetse with fierce, dancing flight, flew round him, and settled on his shoulders. He stood vacantly, gazing at the wise men. His mind could not be sure of anything; but there was something which he wanted to say: something which had to be said. He waited, vacantly, for the message to come back to him, and then drove slowly forward again, and again stopped. His lips mumbled something. His eyes drooped. One trembling hand weakly groped in the air for support. It rested on a hut. He slowly and very wearily collapsed upon the hut, and sat down. His head nodded and nodded. Another tsetse flew down. Roger noticed that the man was cicatrized about the body with old scars. He had been a warrior. He had lived the savage life to the full. He had killed. He had rushed screaming to death, under his tossing Colobus plumes, first of his tribe to stab, before the shields rattled on each other. He had

been lithe, swift, and bloody as the panther. Now he was this trembling, fumbling thing, a log, a driveller, a perch for flies.

"Lionel," said Roger, "it will be awful if we lose our cases."

"Why? They will die in any case."

"But after choosing them like this. If we give them their chance, and they lose the chance. I should feel that perhaps one of the others might have lived."

"We shall choose carefully. We can do no more than that. There's that hideous old crone coming out again. Poor old thing. I dare say she has seen more of the world than either of us. She may be a king's wife and the mother of kings. How merciless these savages are to the old!"

"They're like children. Children have no mercy on the old."

"I wonder what good life is to her?"

"I dare say she remembers the good days. She can't feel very much."

"No," said Lionel. "But I notice that old people feel intensely. They don't feel much. They may feel only one single thing in all the world; but they feel about that with all their strength. It's perfectly ghastly how they feel. We are all islands apart. We do not know each other. We cannot know that woman's mind, nor have we any data by which we can imagine it. That old animal may be like Blake's bird: 'A whole world of delight closed to your senses five.'"

"Very well. Would you cure her? She's not infected as it happens; but would you, if she were?"

"No. She has had her life. I wonder, by the way, if extreme old age is immune from sleeping sickness. I dare say it is. But old age is not common in savage societies. I wish I knew that old woman's story. She has seen a lot, Roger. That is a wonderful face. Now we must choose. Shall we choose a woman?"

"No. Not a woman. We must think of the creature's future. What would become of a woman left alone here? Even if she followed up her tribe, they would probably not admit her. You know that these people do not believe in the possibility of a cure for sleeping sickness. They would only drive her out, or kill her."

"Yes, or let her drift among white men. No. Not a woman. Not an old man, I say. The old have had their lives. Besides, the life of an old savage is generally wretched. There would be nothing for him to do, either here or anywhere else. So we won't have an old man."

"Nor a warrior," said Roger.

"I'm not sure about a warrior," said Lionel. "He would be able to fend for himself. He would be worth taking in by some other tribe short of males. There are points to the warrior."

"He would probably rise up one night and jab us with a shovel-headed spear."

"And then we should shoot him. Yes, that might happen. That narrows it down to the boys."

They looked at the boys, noting their teeth, skulls, and physiognomies. Several shewed signs of congenital malignant disease; others were brutish and loutish looking; but they were, on the whole,

a much nicer-looking lot than the boys who sell papers in London. They narrowed the choice to four. One of them shewed signs of pneumonia. He was rejected. The others were examined carefully. Their prefrontal areas were measured. They were sounded and felt and summed up. The matter was doubtful for a time. The lad with the best head was more drowsy than the other two. The question arose, should the doubtful cure of a genius be preferred to the less doubtful cure of a dunce. "Nature has made an effort for this one," said Lionel, "at the expense of the type. This fellow has got a better head than the others, but he is not quite so fine a specimen. That means that he will be less happy. Nature would probably prefer the other fellows."

"We have nothing to do with Nature," said Roger. "We are out to fight her wherever we can find her. Nature is a collection of vegetables, many of them human. Let us thwart her. Nature's mind is the mind of the flock of sheep. Nature's order is the order of the primeval swamp. Never mind what she would prefer. Sacrifice both the dunces, and let the other have a double chance. I know the dunce-mind, or 'natural' mind, only too well. It would sacrifice any original mind, and brutally, like the beast it is, rather than see its doltish sheep-pen rules infringed."

"Genius is excess," said Lionel. "Genius in a savage means an excess of savagery. This fellow may be a most turbulent, bloodthirsty ruffian. The others, though they will probably be bloodthirsty ruffians, may not be so turbulent."

"If he be turbulent," said Roger, "it will be in a more intellectual manner than is usual with his tribe. Turbulence in a savage is a sign of life. It is only in a civilized man that it is a sign of failure."

"Very well," said Lionel. "We will have the genius. He may disappoint us. I think he is the best type here. Who is to be the other? What do you say to that nice-looking boy, whom we spun some time ago for itch? I like that lad's face."

"You think he would be a good one to save?"

"Well, itch apart, he looked a nice lad. He would be exceptional, socially, just as the other would be exceptional intellectually. He would be to some extent unnatural, which is what you seem to want. Why are you so down on the natural?"

"I've heard some old women of both sexes praising the natural, ever since I was a child. The natural. The born natural. The undeveloped sheep in us, which makes common head to butt the wolf-scarer."

"We'll give them a dose to-day and a dose to-morrow, and a last dose in two and a half weeks' time," said Lionel. "And then they'll either be fit to butt anything in the wide world, or they'll be on their way to Marumba."

"The genius first," said Roger, bringing up the patient. The needle was sterilized. A little prick between the shoulderblades drove the dose home. The other boy followed. Lionel eyed them carefully.

"They must come out of here, now," he said. "They must live with us for to-night. We can't do more now. We've done enough for one day.

To-morrow we must rig them up a shanty up on the hill. They'll be pretty well by to-morrow night."

They were doing finely by the next night, as Lionel had foretold. Their second dose was followed up with a preparation of mercury, which the wise men trusted to complete the cure. The patients were pretty well. But the work and excitement of settling them into quarters near "Portobe" made the doctors very far from pretty well. Though the sick-quarters were little more than a roofed-in wind-screen of tarpaulin, the strain of making it was too much for two overwrought Europeans, not yet used to the heat. Lionel, complaining peevishly of headache, knocked off work before tea. Roger, feeling the boisterous good spirits which so often precede a fit of recurrent fever, helped Lionel into bed, and cheerfully did the sick man's share of building. After this he gave the two patients their supper of biscuit and bully beef (which they ate with very good appetites), and, when they had eaten, put them to bed under their wind-screen. As he worked, he hoped fervently that Lionel was not going to be ill again. He had been peevish, with a slight, irritable fever all the way up the river from Malakoto. If he fell ill again now, all the work would be delayed. Roger wanted to get to work. All their plans had been upset by the bearers' desertion. Any further upsetting of plans might ruin the expedition. The days were passing. Every day brought those poor drowsy devils in the village nearer to their deaths. Soon they would be too ill to cure. He wanted

Lionel well and strong, working beside him towards the discovery of a serum. That was the crying need. With Lionel ill, he could do nothing, or nearly nothing. He had so little scientific knowledge. And besides that, he would have Lionel to watch, and the cleansing and feeding of all those twenty-seven sick. He did not see how things were going to get done.

He told himself that things would have to get done, and that he would have to do them. The resolution cheered him, but the prospect was not made brighter by his discovery soon afterwards that Lionel's temperature had shot up with a sudden leaping bound to 103°. That frightened him. Lionel was not going to be ill, he was ill, and very dangerously ill already. His temperature had risen four or five degrees in about half an hour. The discovery gave Roger a momentary feeling of panic. With a fever like that, Lionel might die, and if Lionel died, what then? He would be there alone, alone in the wilds, with drowsed, half-dead savages. He would be alone there with death, in the heart of a continent. He would go mad there, at the sight of his own shadow, like the Australian in the cheerful story. But for Lionel to die, to lose Lionel, the friend of all these days, the comrade of all these adventures, that was the desolating thought. It would not matter much what happened to himself if Lionel were to die.

It was borne in upon him that Lionel's life would depend on his exertions. He would be doctor, nurse, and chemist. Let him look to it. On the morrow, perhaps, there would be two vigorous

natives to look to the sick in the village. Meanwhile, there was the night to win through; and that burning temperature to lower.

He managed to administer a dose of quinine. There was nothing more that he could do. Crouching down by the sick man's side made him feel queer. He remembered that he had left neither food nor water in the patients' hut. They ought to have food by them in case they woke hungry, as they probably would, after their long, irregular fast. He carried them some biscuit, and a bucket half full of water. They were sleeping heavily. Nature was resting in them. While coming back from the hut, he noticed that the night struck cold. He shivered. His teeth began to chatter. He felt that the cold had stricken to his liver. He wished that he had not gone out. Coming into the house, he felt the need of a fire; but he did not dare to light one, on account of Lionel. Lionel lay tossing deliriously, babbling the halves of words. Roger gave him more quinine, and took a strong dose himself. There was something very strange about the quinine. It seemed to come to his mouth from a hand immensely distant. There was a long, long arm, like a crooked railway, tied to the hand. It seemed to Roger that it could not possibly crook itself sufficiently to let the hand reach his mouth. After the strangeness of the hand had faded, he felt horribly cold. He longed to have fire all round him, and inside him. He regarded Lionel stupidly. He could do nothing more. He would lie down. If Lionel wanted anything, he would get up to fetch it. He could not sit up with Lionel. He was

in for a fever. He got into his bed, and heaped the blankets round him, trembling. Almost at once the real world began to blur and change. It was still the real world, but he was seeing much in it which he had not suspected. Many queer things were happening before his eyes. He lay shuddering, with chattering teeth, listening, as he thought, to the noise made by the world as it revolved. It was a crashing, booming, resolute noise, which droned down and anon piped up high. It went on and on.

In the middle of all the noise he had the strange fancy that his body was not in bed at all, but poised in air. His bed lay somewhere below him. Sitting up he could see part of it, infinitely distant, below his outstretched feet. The ceiling was swelling and swelling just above him. It seemed as vast as heaven. All the time it swelled he seemed to shrink. He was lying chained somewhere, while his body was shrinking to the vanishing point. He could feel himself dwindling, while the blackness above grew vaster. He heard something far below him—or was it at his side?—something or somebody speaking very rapidly. He tried to call out to Lionel, but all that he could say was something about an oyster tree. There was a great deal of chattering. Somebody was trying to get in, or somebody was trying to get out. Something or somebody was in great danger, and, do what he could, he could not help growing smaller, smaller, smaller. At last the blackness fell in upon his littleness and blotted it out.

He awoke in the early morning, feeling as though

his bones had been taken out. His mouth had a taste as though brown paper had been burnt in it. Wafts of foul smell passed over him as each fresh gust blew in at the doorway. Something was the matter with his eyes. He had an obscurity of vision. He could not see properly. Things changed and merged into each other. He lifted a hand to brush away the distorting film. He was thirsty. He was too weak to define more clearly what he wanted; it was not water; it was not food; it was not odour; but a bitter, pungent, astringent something which would be all three to him. He wanted something which would cleanse his mouth, supplant this foulness in his nostrils, and nerve the jelly of his marrow. Weakly desiring this potion, he fell asleep from exhaustion. He woke much refreshed after a sleep of about eight hours.

When he looked about him, he saw that Lionel was still unconscious. He was lying there uneasily, muttering and restless, with a much-flushed face. His hands were plucking and scratching at his chest, There was that about him which suggested high fever. Roger hurriedly brought a thermometer and took the sick man's temperature. It had sunk to less than 100°. He thrust aside the pyjama coat, and felt the heart with his finger. The pulse was beating with something of the batting motion of a guttering electric light. The chest was inflamed, with a slight reddish rash.

Roger sat down upon his bed and took a few deep breaths to steady himself. Afterwards he remembered telling himself in a loud, clear voice

that he would have to go into this with a clear head, a very clear head. He swilled his head with water from the bucket. When he felt competent he remembered another and more certain symptom. He advanced to the sick man and looked anxiously at his throat glands. He had braced himself for the shock; but it was none the less severe when it came. The glands were visibly swollen. They were also very tender to the touch. Lionel had relapsed. He was suffering from trypanosomiasis. The disease was on him.

Roger passed the next few minutes biting his lips. From time to time he went back to the bed to look at the well-known symptoms. He was sure, only too sure, but each time he went he prayed to God that he might be mistaken. He went over these symptoms in his mind. High temperature, a rapid pulse, the glands of the neck swollen, a rash on the chest, hands, or shoulders, a flushed face, and feeble movements. There was no doubting the symptoms. Lionel was in a severe relapse.

Even when one is certain of something terrible, there is still a clinging to hope, a sense of the possibility of hope. Roger sitting there on the bed, staring at the restless body, had still a hope that he might be wrong. He dressed himself carefully, saying over and over again that he must keep a level head. There was still one test to apply. It was necessary to be certain. He got out the microscope, and sterilized a needle. When he was ready he punctured one of Lionel's glands, and blew out the matter on to a slide. Very anxiously, after

preparing the slide for observation, he focussed the lens, and looked down onto the new, unsuspected world, bustling below him on the glass.

He was looking down on a strange world of discs, among which little wriggling wavy membranes, something like the tails of tadpoles, waved themselves slowly, and lashed out with a sort of whip-lash snout. Each had a dark little nucleus in his middle, and a minute spot near the anterior end. There was no room for hope in Roger's mind when he saw those little waving membranes, bustling actively, splitting, multiplying, lashing with their whips. They were trypanosomes in high activity. He watched them for a minute or two horrified by the bluntness and lowness of the organism, and by its blind power. It was a trembling membrane a thousandth part of an inch long. It had brought Lionel down to that restless body on the bed. It had reduced all Lionel's knowledge and charm and skill to a little plucking at the skin, a little tossing, a little babbling. It was the visible pestilence, the living seed of death, sown in the blood.

Roger made himself some tea. Having made it, he forced himself to eat, repeating that he must eat to keep strong, lest he should fail Lionel in any way. Food, and the hot diffusive stimulant, made him more cheerful. He told himself that Lionel was only in a fit of the frequently recurring trypanosome fever. After a day or two of fever he would come to again, weak, anæmic, and complaining of headache. A dose of atoxyl would destroy all the symptoms in a few hours. Even if he did not take

the atoxyl, there was no certainty that the fever would turn to sleeping sickness. There was a chance of it; but no certainty. A doctor's first duty was to be confident. Well, he was going to be confident. He was going to pull Lionel through. He remembered a conversation between two Americans in a railway carriage. He had overheard them years before, while travelling south from Fleetwood. They were talking of a coming prize-fight between two notorious boxers who, while training, spent much energy in contemning each other in the Press, threatening each other with annihilation, of the most final kind. "Them suckers chew the rag fit to beat the band," said one of the men. "Why cain't they give it a rest? Let 'em slug each other good, in der scrap. De hell wid dis chin music."

"Aw git off," said the other. "Them quitters, if they didn't talk hot air till dey believed it, dey'd never git near der ring."

He had always treasured the conversation in his memory. He thought of it now. Perhaps if doctors did not force themselves "to talk hot air" till their patients believed it, very few patients would ever leave their beds. He cleared away the breakfast things and made the house tidy. He gave Lionel an extra pillow. Then he went out into the morning to think of what he should do.

When he got out into the air he remembered the two patients. It was his duty now to dose them and give them food. All that he had to do was to walk to their hut, see that they ate their breakfast, and give them each a blue pill afterwards. The

drug would have taken a stronger hold during the night, and the action of atoxyl is magical even in bad cases. He expected to find them alert and lively, changed by the drug's magic to two intelligent merry negroes. It was not too much to hope, perhaps. He prayed that it might be so. There was nothing for which he longed so much as for some strong evidence of the power of atoxyl to arrest the disease. He topped the rise and looked down on his handiwork.

All was quiet in the clumsy hut. The negroes were not stirring. Roger was vaguely perplexed when he saw that they were not about. Even if they were no better than they had been the day before they ought still to be up and sunning. He wondered what had happened. A fear that the drug had failed him mingled with his memory of a book about man-eating lions. He broke into a run.

He had only to push aside the tarpaulin which served for door to see that the two patients had gone. When they had gone, there was no means of knowing; but gone they were. They had gone at a time when there had been light enough for them to see the biscuits and the bucket; for biscuits and bucket were gone with them. He could see no trace of the two men on the wide savannah which rolled away below him. He supposed that some homing instinct had sent them back to the village. He was cheered by the thought. They had been cured within two days. They had been changed from oafish lumps into thinking beings. Now he would cure Lionel in the same way. As he

hurried back to "Portobe," he was thankful that some of the drug remained to them. He would have been in a strange quandary had they used all the drug two days before.

XI

There's a lean fellow beats all conquerors.
Old Fortunatus.

WHEN he began to prepare to give the injection, he could not find the atoxyl bottle. He searched anxiously through the hut for it, but could not find it. It was an unmistakable glass bottle, half-full of distilled water, at the bottom of which lay some of the white sediment as yet undissolved. The bottle bore a square white label, marked ATOXYL in big capitals, printed by Lionel with a blue pencil. Roger could not see it anywhere. He looked in all the boxes, one after the other. He looked in the gun-cases, under the folds of the tent, in the chinks and crannies, everywhere. It was not there. When he had searched the hut twice from end to end, in different directions, he decided that it was not there. His next thought was that it must have been left in the hut with the two patients, and that the patients must have carried it off as treasure trove. In that case, perhaps, it would be gone for ever. He would have noticed it that morning had it been still in the hut. Then he thought that it might still be in the hut. It might have been put behind a box. He might have failed to see it. It was necessary to make certain. He hurried to the hut and searched it through. A couple of minutes of

searching shewed him that the bottle was not there.

He racked his brains, trying to think what had become of it. When had he last seen it? Lionel and he had been at the hut during the preceding afternoon. They had staked in the uprights of the shelter; and had then knocked off for a rest, as Lionel was not feeling well. During the rest he (Roger) had brought the atoxyl from "Portobe," and had given the second injection to the two patients. So much was clear. What had happened then? He tried to remember. After that he had gone on with the building, while Lionel had rested. He distinctly remembered Lionel sitting down on the wall-top with the atoxyl bottle in his hands. What had he done with it after that? Surely he had taken it back with him to "Portobe"? In any case there could be no doubt that Lionel had been the last to touch it. Lionel had taken the bottle to put it away; and it seemed now only too likely that he had put it away in a place where no one else could find it.

Roger tried to remember exactly how ill Lionel had been when he had gone back to "Portobe." He remembered that he had been flushed and peevish, but he could not remember any symptoms of light-headedness. He had crept off alone while Roger was fixing a roof-ridge. Roger, suddenly noticing that he had gone, had followed him to "Portobe," and had found him sitting vacantly on the floor, staring with unseeing eyes. It was certain that the atoxyl bottle was not with him then.

"If that were so," said Roger to himself, "he must have dropped it or put it down between "Portobe" and this. Here is where he was sitting. This is the path by which he walked. Is the bottle anywhere on the path, or near it?" It was not. Careful search shewed that it was not. "Well," said Roger to himself, "he must have thrown it away. The fever made him desperate or peevish for a moment, and he has thrown it away. Where could he have thrown it?"

Unfortunately there was a wide expanse over which he might have thrown it. If he had thrown it downhill it might have rolled far, after hitting the ground. If he had thrown it uphill, it might have got hidden or smashed among the loose stones from the ruins. Having satisfied himself that Lionel for the moment was not appreciably worse, Roger started down the village to find his two patients. He thought that if they could be made to understand what was missing, the search for the bottle might be made by three pairs of eyes instead of by one. Some possibility, or, to be more exact, some hope of a possibility, of the bottle being in the possession of the patients, occurred to him. The thought that perhaps Lionel's life depended on the caprice of two cheerful negro-boys made him tremble.

There was no trace of the patients in the village. They were not there, nor was Roger enough skilled in tracking to know whether they had been there. As they were not there, he could only suppose that, on finding themselves whole, among the wreck of their tribe, they had set out to follow

their fellows by the tracks left by the cattle. He thought it possible that they might return soon, in a day or two, if not that very day. But there was not much chance of their returning with the atoxyl bottle, even if they had set out with it. He figured to himself the progression of a bottle in the emotional estimation of a negro who had never before seen one. First, it would appear as a rich treasure, something to be boldly stolen, but fearfully prized. Then it would appear as something with cubic capacity, possibly containing potables. Then, after sampling of the potable, in this case unpleasant, it would be emptied. Its final position ranged between the personal ornament and the cock-shy. Meanwhile, Roger had the sick to feed.

After that he returned to Lionel. Lionel's temperature had dropped slightly, but he was hardly conscious yet. Roger left him while he began the weary, fruitless search over a space of Africa a hundred yards long by eighty broad. He measured a space forty yards on each side of the track between the hut and "Portobe." If the bottle had been thrown away, it had been thrown away within that space. It was unlikely to have fallen more than forty yards from the track. A squat short-necked bottle is not an easy thing to throw. If it were not there, then he would have to conclude that the patients had taken it. It was a long, exhausting search. It was as wearisome as the search for lost ball at cricket. But in this case the seeker knew that his comrade's life depended on his success. He paced to and fro,

treading over every inch of the measured ground, beating it beneath his feet, stamping to scare the snakes, feeling his blood leap whenever he struck a stone. The sun filled earth and sky with wrinklings of brass and glass at white, tremulous heat, oozing in discs from his vortex of spilling glare. Many times in the agony of that search Roger had to break off to look to Lionel, and to drink from the canvas bucket of boiled water. He prayed that Lionel might recover consciousness, if only for a minute, so that he might tell him in which direction the bottle had been flung. But Lionel did not recover consciousness. He lay in his bed, muttering to himself, talking nonsense in a little, low, indifferent voice. The most that Roger could say for him was that he was quieter. His hands were quieter; his voice was quieter. It was nothing to be thankful for. It meant merely that the patient was weaker.

After it was over, Roger thought that his search for the lost bottle was the best thing he had ever done. He had trampled carefully over every inch of the measured ground. He had taken no chances, he had neglected no possible hole nor tussock. A wide space of trodden grass and battered shrub testified to the thoroughness of his painful hunt. And all was useless. The bottle was not there. The atoxyl was lost.

Once before, several years past, Roger had watched the approaching death of one intimately known. He had seen his drunken father dying. He had not loved his father; he had felt little grief for him. But the sight of him dying woke

in him a blind pity for all poor groping human souls, "who work themselves such wrong" in a world so beautiful given for so short a time. He had looked on that death as though it were a natural force, grave and pitiless as wisdom, hiding some erring thing which had been at variance from it. He had thought of Ottalie's death, down in the cabin, among the wreck of the supper-tables. In his mind he had seen Ottalie, so often, flung down on to the rank of revolving chairs, and struggling up with wild eyes, but with noble courage even then, to meet the flood shocking in to end her. That death seemed a monstrous, useless horror to him. Now a link which bound him to Ottalie was about to snap. He was watching the sick-bed of a man who had often talked with her, a man who had known her intimately. Lionel, with the simple, charming spirit, so like in so many ways what Ottalie would have been had she been born a man, was mortally sick. The sight of him lying there unconscious struck him to the heart. That mumbling body on the bed was his friend, his dear comrade, a link binding him to everything which he cherished. A veil was being drawn across his friend's mind. He was watching it come closer and closer, and the house within grow dark. In a little while it would be drawn down close, shutting in the life for ever. If he did not act at once it would be too late; Lionel would die. If Lionel were to die, he would be alone in Africa, with that thing on the bed.

He knelt down by the cot in a whirl of jarring suggestions. What was he to do? Anxiety had

lifted him out of himself on to another plane, a plane of torturing emotion. He felt a painful clearness of intellect and an utter deadness of controlling will. His ideas swarmed in his head, yet he had no power to select from them. He saw so many things which he might be doing; building a raft to take them to Malakoto, making, or trying to make, a serum, to nullify the infection; there were many things. But how could he leave Lionel in this state, and how was he to get Lionel out of this state? He told himself that large doses of arsenic might be of use; the next moment he realized that they would be useless. He had tried to make Lionel take arsenic on the voyage upstream, as a prophylactic. Lionel had replied that arsenic was no good to him. "Trypanosomes," he had said, "become inured to particular drugs. Mine got inured to arsenic the last time I was out here. If my trypanosomes recur you'll have to try something else." What else was he to try?

He had read that marked temporary improvement shews itself after a variety of treatments, after any treatment, in fact, which tends to improve the health of particular organs. He tried the simplest and least dangerous of those which he remembered. It could do no harm, in any case. If it did good, he would feel braced to try something more searching.

The mere act of administering the dose strengthened him. Action is always a cordial to a mind at war with itself. At times of conflagration the fiddle has saved more than Nero from disquieting thought, tending to suicide. When at

last he had forced his will to the selection of a course, he felt more sure of himself. He set about the preparation of food for the patient, and, when that was made and given, he sterilized his hands for the beginning of the delicate task of culture-making. He had plenty of tubes of media of different kinds. He selected those most likely to give quick results. They were media of bouillon and agar. One of them, a special medium of rabbit's flesh and Witte's peptone, had been prepared by Lionel months before, in far-distant London. Roger remembered how they had talked together, in their enthusiasm, during the making of that medium. He had had little thought then of the circumstances under which it would come to be used. He had never before felt home-sick for London. He was home-sick now. He longed to be back in London with Lionel, in the bare, airy room in Pump Court, where the noise of the Strand seemed like the noise of distant trains which never passed. He longed to be back there, out of this loneliness, with Lionel well again. The memory of their little bickerings came back to him. Travel is said to knock off the angles of a man. If the man has fire in him, the process may burn the fingers of those near him. Little moments of irritation, after sleepless nights, after fever, after over-exertion, had flamed up between them. No Europeans can travel together for many hundreds of miles in the tropics without these irritable moments. They derive from physical weakness of some kind, rather than from any weakness of character, though the links which bind the two are, of course, close and subtle.

He told himself this; but he was not to be comforted. The memory of those occasional, momentary jarrings gave him keen pain. If Lionel got over this illness, he would make it up to him. He thought of many means by which he might make their journey together more an adventure of the finer character. "Lionel," he said, aloud, looking down on the sick man, "I want you to forgive me."

There was no sign of comprehension from Lionel. He lay there muttering nervously. His skin was hot to the touch with that dry febrile heat which gives to him who feels it such a shocking sense of the body's usurpation by malign power. His temperature was beginning to show the marked and dreadful evening rise. Roger could guess from that that there would be no improvement until the morning fall. After feeling the fluttering, rapid pulse, and the weakness of the movements of the hands, he had grave doubts whether the body would be able to stand the strain of that sudden fall.

He dragged up a box and sat staring at Lionel, torn by many thoughts. One thought was that these moments would be less terrible if we could live always in this awakened sense of the responsibility and wonder of life. Life was not a succession of actions, planned or not planned, successful or thwarted, nor was it a "congressus materiai" held together for a time by food and exercise. It was something tested by and evolved from those things, which were, in a sense, its instruments, the bricks with which the house is built. He began

to realize how hard it is to follow life in a world in which the things of life have such bright colours and moving qualities. He had not realized it before, even when he had been humbled by the news of Ottalie's death.

In his torment he "thought long" of Ottalie. He called back to his memory all those beautiful days, up the glens, among the hills. Words which she had spoken came back to him, each phrase a precious stone, carefully set in his imagination of what the prompting thought had been in her mind. Ottalie had lived. He could imagine Ottalie sitting in judgment upon all the days of her life ranked in coloured succession before her, and finding none which had been lived without reference, however unconscious, to some fine conception of what exists unchangingly, though only half expressed by us.

He roused himself. That was why women are so much finer than men; they are occupied with life itself, men with its products, or its management. Whatever his shortcomings had been, he was no longer dealing with the things of life, but with life itself.

Here he was, for the first time, squarely face to face with a test of his readiness to deal with life. He forced himself to work again, following the process with a cautious nicety of delicate care which an older artist would have despised as niggling and stippling. From time to time he stopped to look at Lionel, and to take the temperature. The temperature was swiftly rising.

After some days the fever left Lionel. It left

him with well-marked symptoms of sleeping sickness. The man was gone. The body remained, weak and trembling, sufficiently conscious to answer simple questions, but neither energetic enough to speak unprompted, nor to ask for food when hungry. How long he might live in that state Roger could not guess. He might live for some weeks; he might die suddenly, shaken by the violent changing of the temperature between night and morning. It was not till the power of speech was checked that the horror of it came home to Roger. Lionel's monosyllables became daily less distinct, until at last he spoke as though his tongue had grown too large for his mouth. The sight of his friend turning brutish before his eyes made Roger weep. The strain was telling on him; his recurrent fever was shaking him. He felt that if Lionel were to die, he would go mad. He could not leave his friend. Even in the daytime, with the work to be done, he could hardly bear to leave him. At night his one solace was to stare at his friend, in an agony of morbid pity, remembering what that man had been to him before the closing in of the veil. The veil was closing more tightly every day. Roger could picture to himself the change going on inside the head, on the surface of the brain, behind the fine eyes, so drowsy now. Such a little thing would arrest that change. Two cubic centimetres of a white soluble powder. He went over it in his mind, day after day, till the craving for some of that powder was more than he could bear. "Lionel," he would say. "Lionel, Lionel." And the drowsy head would

lift itself patiently, and grunt, shewing some sort of recognition. If Lionel had been a stranger (so he told himself) it might have been endurable; but every attitude and gesture of the patient was chained to his inmost life by a hundred delicate links. That he had known Ottalie was the sharpest thing to bear. In losing Lionel he was losing something which bound Ottalie to him. Another torment was the knowledge of his own insufficiency. He thought of the strongly efficient soldiers and scientists who had studied the disease. He loathed the years of emotional self-indulgence which had unfitted him for such a crisis. He longed to have for one half-hour the knowledge and skill of those scientists, their scrupulous clinical certainty, their reserve of alternative resource.

In reality he was doing very creditably. One of the most marked qualities in his character was that extreme emotional tenderness, or sensibility, which is so strong, and in the lack of the robuster fibres, so vicious, an ingredient of the artistic or generating intellect. This sensitiveness had been the cause in him of a scrupulous aloofness from the world. It had made him maintain a sort of chastity of idea, not so much from an appreciation of the value of whiteness of mind as from an inherent fastidious dislike of blackness. As he yielded more and more to the domination of this aloofness, as the worker in an emotional art is tempted to do, his positive activities grew weaker till he had come to seek and appreciate in others those qualities which, essential to manly nature, had been etiolated in himself by the super-imposition of the unreal.

This desire to be virtuous vicariously, by possessing virtuous friends, had been gratified pleasantly, with advantage to himself, and with real delight to those robuster ones who felt his charm. But the removal of the friends had shewn the essential want. The man was like a childless woman, groping about blindly for an emotional outlet. In his misery he found an abiding satisfaction in an intense tenderness to the suffering near him. In his knowledge of himself he had feared that his own bodily discomfort would make him a selfish, petulant, callous nurse. Before Lionel had fallen ill, he had been prone to complain of pains, often real enough to a weak, highly sensitive nature, exposed, after years of easy living, to the hardships of tropical travel. Lionel's illness had altered that. It had lifted him into a state of mental exaltation. In their intenser, spiritual forms, such states have been called translation, gustation of God, ingression to the divine shadow, communion with the higher self. They may be defined as states in which the mind ceasing to be conscious of the body as a vehicle, drives it superbly to the dictated end, with the indifference of a charioteer driving for high stakes.

Though in this mood he was supported to fine deeds, he was denied the knowledge of his success in them. His heart was wrung with pity for the sufferers for whom he cared so tenderly, day after day; but the depth of his pity made his impotence to help an agony. He saw too plainly that the most that he could do was nothing. In the darker recesses of his mind hovered a horror of giving

way and relapsing to the barbarism about him. His nerve had begun to tremble under the strain. What he felt was the recurrence of an intense religious mood which had passed over his mind at the solemn beginning of manhood. He was finding, now, after years of indifference, the cogency of the old division into good and evil. As in boyhood, during that religious phase, he had at times a strange, unreasonable sense of the sinfulness of certain thoughts and actions, which to others, not awakened, and to himself, in blinder moods, seemed harmless. He began to resolve all things into terms of the spiritual war. All this external horror was a temptation of the devil, to be battled with lest the soul perish in him. Little things, little momentary thoughts, momentary promptings of the sense, perhaps only a desire for rest, became charged, in his new reckoning of values, with terrible significances. Often, after three hours of labour in the village, after feeding and cleaning those drowsy dying children, in the hot sun, till he was exhausted and sick at heart, a fear of giving way to the devil urged him to apply to them some of the known alleviations, arsenic, mercury, or the like. He would arise, and dose them all carefully, knowing that it was useless, that it would merely prolong a living death; but knowing also that to do so, at all costs, was the duty of one who had taken the military oath of birth into a Christian race. He learned that the higher notes of a whistle pleased those even far advanced in sleep. He found time each day to whistle to them in those few livelier minutes before meals, when the drowsy

became almost alert. He judged that anything which stimulated them must necessarily be good for them. He tried patiently and tenderly many mild sensual excitations on them, giving them scent or snuff to inhale, letting them suck pieces of his precious sugar, burning blue lights at night before them, giving them slight electric shocks from his battery. He felt that by these means he kept alive the faculties of the brain for some few days longer. From Tiri, the wrinkled old crone, the only uninfected person there, he tried hard to learn the dialect; but age had frozen her brain, he could learn nothing from her except "Katirkama." He never rightly knew what Katirkama was. It was something very amusing, since it made her laugh heartily whenever it was mentioned. It had something to do with drumming on a native drum. Katirkama. He beat the drum, and the old body became one nod of laughter, bowing to the beat with chuckles. "Katirkama," she cried, giggling. "Katirkama." After Katirkama she would follow him about, holding his hand, squeaking, till he gave her some sugar.

When the work in the village was finished, he used to walk back to Lionel, whom he would find drowsed, just as he had left him. On good days he had some little experiment to make. He would repeat some trick or accidental gesture which had caught the dying attention of a native. If he were lucky, the trick brought back some lively shadow of Lionel. Even if it passed away at once, it was cheering to see that shadow. More usually the trick failed. Having seen the occasional effect

of them, he became studious of tricks which might help to keep the intelligence alert. The sight of Lionel gave him so crushing a sense of what was happening in the affected brain, that he found it easy to imagine fancies which, as he judged, would be arresting to it. The burning of magnesium wire and the turning of a policeman's rattle were his most successful efforts. One day, while carefully dropping some dilute carbolic acid into a chegua nest on Lionel's foot, he found that the burning sensation gave pleasure. It seemed to reach the brain like a numbed tickling. Lionel laughed a little uneasy, nervous laugh. It was the only laughter heard at "Portobe" for many days.

Though his work occupied him for ten hours daily, it did not occupy the whole of him. Much of it, such as the preparation of food and the daily disinfection of the huts, was mechanical. His mind was left free to console itself by speculation as best it could. His first impressions of the solitude were ghastly and overpowering. Waking and asleep he felt the horror of the prospect of losing Lionel. It was not that he dreaded the prospect of being alone. His fear was religious. He feared that the barbarism of the solitude would overpower his little drilled force of civilized sentiment. He was warring against barbarism. Lionel was his powerful ally. Looking out from his hut on the hill he could see barbarism all round him, in a vast and very silent, menacing landscape, secret in forest, sullen in its red, shrinking river, brooding in the great plain, dotted with bones and stones.

Even the littleness of an English landscape would have been hard to bear, but this immensity of savagery awed him. He doubted whether he would be able to bear the presence of that sight without his ally by him.

He knew that if he let it begin to get upon his nerves he would be ruined. He took himself in hand on the second day of Lionel's fever. His situation made him remember a conversation heard years before at his rooms in Westminster. O'Neill and a young Australian journalist, of the crude and vigorous kind nurtured by the *Bulletin*, had passed the evening in talk with him. The Australian had told them of the loneliness of Australia, and of shepherds and settlers who went mad in the loneliness on the clearings at the back of beyond. O'Neill had said that at present Australian literature was the product of home-sick Englishmen; but that a true Australian literature would begin among those lonely ones. "One of those fellows just going mad will begin a literature. And that literature will be the distinctive Australian literature. In the cities you will only get noisy imitations of what is commonest in the literature of the mother country." They had stayed talking till four in the morning. He had never seen the Australian since that time. He remembered now his stories of shepherds who bolted themselves into their huts in the effort to get away from the loneliness which had broken their nerve. He must take care, he said, not to let that state of mind take hold upon him.

He began to school himself that night. He

forced himself up the hill, into the Zimbabwe, at the eerie moment when the dusk turns vaguely darker, and the stars are still pale. All the dimness of ruin and jungle brooded malignantly, informed by menace. Faint noises of creeping things rustled in the alley between the walls. Dew was fast forming. Drops wetted him with cold splashes as he broke through creepers. Below him stretched the continent. No light of man burned in that expanse. There was a blackness of forest, and a ghostliness of grass, all still. Out of the night behind him came a stealthiness of approach, more a sense than a sense perception. Coming in the night, so secretly, it was hard to locate. It had that protective ventriloquism of sounds produced in the dark. There is an animal sense in us, not nearly etiolated yet, which makes us quick to respond to a light noise in the night. It makes us alert upon all sides; but with a tremulous alertness, for we have outgrown the instinctive knowledge of what comes by night. Roger faced round swiftly, with a knocking heart. The noise, whatever it was, ceased. After an instant of pause a spray, till then pinned, swept loose, as though the talon pinning it had lifted. It swept away with a faint swishing noise, followed by a pattering of drops. After that there came a silence while the listener and the hidden watcher stared into the blackness for what should follow. The noise of the spattering gave Roger a sense of the direction of the danger, if it were danger. He drew out his revolver. Another spray spilled a drop or two. Then, for an instant, near the ground, not far away, two greenish specks

burned like glow-worms, like crawling fireflies, like two tiny electric lights suddenly turned on. They were shut off instantly. They died into the night, making it blacker. After they had faded there came a hushed rustling which might have been near or far off. When that, too, had died, there was a silence.

It was so still that the dripping of the dew made the night like a death vault. Terrible, inscrutable stars burned aloft. Roger pressed his back against the wall. Up and up towered the wall, an immense labour, a cynical pile, stamped with lust's cruelties. It almost had life, so seen. In front was the unknown; behind, that uncanny thing. Roger waited, tense, till the darkness was alive with all fear. Everything was in the night there, gibbering faces, death, the sudden cold nosing of death's pig-snout on the heart. He swung his revolver up, over his left elbow, and fired.

The report crashed among the ruin, sending the night rovers fast and far. Chur-ra-rak! screamed the scattering fowl. Roger paid little heed to them. He was bending down in his tracks hugging his forehead. The hammer of the kicking revolver had driven itself into his brow with a welt which made him sick. He groped his way down the hill again, thinking himself lucky that the iron had not smashed his eye. He thought no more of terror for that night.

But the next night it came with the dark. The old savage devil of the dark was there; the darkness of loneliness, the loneliness of silence, the immanent terror of places not yet won, still ruled

by the old unclean gods, not yet exorcised by virtue. Looking at it, after night had fallen, from the door of "Portobe," it seemed full of the promise of death. The little rustling noises were there; the suggestion of stealthy death; the brooding of it all. A braver man would have been awed by it. It was not all cowardice which daunted Roger. It was that animal something not yet etiolated, which on a dark night in a lonely place at a noise of stirring makes a man's heart thump like a buck's heart. To stare into the blackness with eyes still dazzled from the camp-fire gave a sense of contrast not easy to overcome. The comfort of the fire was something, something civilized, conquered, human. And the beloved figure lying ill was one of his own kind, leagued with him against the inhuman. The vastness of the inhuman overpowered his will. He dared not face it. Sudden terror told him of something behind him. He hurried into the hut and heaped boxes against the tarpaulin door.

The moment of fear passed, leaving him ashamed. He was giving way to nerves. That would not do. He must brace himself to face the darkness. He forced himself down the hill to the village, and into the village. Kneeling down he peered into the hut where old Tiri rocked herself by a fire of reeds, like the withered beauty in Villon. She did not see him. She was crooning a ditty. From time to time, with a nervous jerk of the arm, she flung on a handful of reed, which crackled and flared, so that she chuckled. He was comforted by the sight of her. Any resolute endurance of life is comforting to the perplexed. He walked back up

the hill without the tremors he had felt in going down. Something in the walk, the coolness and quiet of it, made him forget his fears. He experienced an animal feeling of being, for the moment, at one with the night. "Surely," he thought, "if man can conceive a spiritual state, calm and august like the night, he can attain it." It might even be that by brooding solitary, like the night itself, one would arrive at the truth sooner than by the restless methods left behind. Standing by the door of his hut again, the darkness exalted him, not, in the common way, by giving him a sense of the splendour of nature, but by heightening for an instant his knowledge of the superior splendour of men.

He stood looking out for a little while before some rally of delirium called him within to his friend. Later, when he had finished his work for the night, he thought gloomily of what his fate would be if the death of Lionel left him alone there, so many miles from his fellows. What was he to do? How was he to cross four hundred miles of tropical country to the nearest settlement of whites? No civilized man had been there since the Phœnicians fought their last rearguard fight round the wagons of the last gold train. Four hundred miles meant a month's hard marching, even if all went well. He could not count on doing it in less than a month. And how was he to live during that month, how guide himself? Even in mere distance it was a hard walk. It was much such a walk as, say, from the Land's End to Aberdeen, but with all the natural difficulties multiplied

by ten, and all the artificial helps removed. It was going to be forced on him. He would have to attempt that walk or die alone, where he was, after watching his friend die. He glanced anxiously at Lionel to see if there were any chance of Lionel's being dragged and helped over that distance. He saw no chance. He would have to watch Lionel dying. He would have to try to stave off Lionel's death by all the means known to him, knowing all the time that all the means were useless. Then he would bury Lionel, after watching him die. After that he would have to watch the villagers dying; and then, when quite alone, set forth.

And to what would he set forth? What had life to give him, if, as was very unlikely, he should win back to life? His life was Ottalie's. He had consecrated his talent to her, he had devoted all his powers to her. The best of his talent had been a shadowy sentimental thing, by which no great life could be lived, no great sorrow overcome. The best of his powers had left him in the centre of a continent, helpless to do what he had set out to do. He had not made the world "nobler for her sake." Ah, but he would, he said, starting up, filled suddenly with a vision of that dead beauty. He would help the world to all that it had lost in her. He must be Ottalie's fair mind at work still, blessing the world. So would his mind possess her, creeping in about her soul, drinking more and more of her, till her strength was the strength by which he moved. She was very near him then, he felt. He felt that all this outward world of his was only an image of his mind, and that she being in his mind,

was with him. His heart was a wretched hut in Africa, in which a sick man babbled to a weary man. But there in his heart, he felt, was that silent guest, beautiful as of old, waiting in the half-darkness, waiting quietly, watching him, wanting him to do the right thing, waiting till it was done, so that she might rise, and walk to him, and take his hands. He must not fail her.

He turned to the corner in which he felt her presence. "Ottalie! Ottalie!" he said in a low voice. "Ottalie, dear, help me to do this. I'm going to fail, dear. Help me not to." Lionel moaned a little, turning on his side again. A draught ruffled the fire slightly. No answer moved in his heart. He had half expected that the answer would speak within him, in three short words. No words came. Instead, he felt burningly the image of Ottalie as he had seen her once up the Craga' Burn, one summer at sunset. They had stood among the moors together, on the burn's flat grassy bank, near a little drumming fall, which guggled over a sway of rushes. Sunset had given a glory to the moors. All the great hills rose up in the visionary clearness of an Irish evening after rain. A glow like the glow of health was on them. It was ruddy on Ottalie's cheek, as she turned her grave hazel eyes upon him, smiling, to ask him if he saw the Rest House. She meant a magic rest-house, said, in popular story, to be somewhere on the hill up Craga' way. Roger had talked with men who claimed to have been beguiled there by "them" to rest for the night. Ottalie and he had narrowed down its possible whereabouts almost to the spot

where they were standing; and she had turned, smiling, with the sun upon her, to ask him if he saw it. They had never seen it, though they had often looked for it at magical moments of the day. Now looking back he saw that old day with all the glow of the long-set sun. Ottalie, and himself, and the Craga' Burn, the rush sway trailing, the pleasant, faint smell of the blight on the patch beyond, the whiff of turf smoke. Ottalie. Ottalie. Ottalie in the blind grave with the dogrose on her breast.

Living alone fosters an intensity of personal life which sometimes extinguishes the social instinct, even in those who live alone by the compulsion of accident. It had become Roger's lot to look into himself for solace. Most of those things which society had given to him during his short, impressionable life were useless to him. He had to depend now upon the intensity of his own nature. He reckoned up the extent of his civilization, as shewn by the amount retained in his memory. It amounted, when all was said, when allowance had been made for the amount absorbed unconsciously into character, to a variety of smatterings, some of them pleasant, some interesting, and all tinged by the vividness of his personal predilection. He had read, either in the original or in translation, all the masterpieces of European literature. He had seen, either in the original or in reproduction, all the masterpieces of European art. His memory for art and literature was a good general one; but general knowledge was now useless to him. What he wanted was particular knowledge, memory of

precise, firm, intellectual images, in words, or colour, or bronze, to give to his mind the strength of their various order, as he brooded on them menaced by death. It was surprising to him how little remained of all that he had read and seen. The tale of Troy remained, very vividly, with many of the tragedies rising from it. Dante remained. The Morte D'Arthur remained. Much of the Bible remained. Of Shakespeare he had a little pocket volume containing eight plays. These, and the memories connected with them, were in his mind with a reality not till then known to him. Among the lesser writers he found that his memory was kinder to those whom he had learned by heart as a boy than to those whom he had read with interest as a man. He knew more Scott than Flaubert, and more Mayne Reid than Scott. From thinking over these earlier literary idols, with a fierceness of tenderness not to be understood save by those who have been forced, as he was forced, to the construction of an intense inner life, he began to realize the depth and strength of the emotion of the indulgence of memory.

Thenceforward he indulged his memory whenever his work spared his intelligence. He lived again in his past more intensely than he had ever lived. His life in Ireland, his days with Ottalie, her words and ways and looks, he realized again minutely with an exactness which was, perhaps, half imaginative. He troubled his peace with the sweetness of those visions. The more deeply true they were, the more strong their colour; the more intense the vibration of their speech, the more sharp

was the knowledge of their unreality, the more bitter the longing for the reality. He was homesick for the Irish hills which rose up in his mind so clearly, threaded by the flash of silver. He thought of them hour after hour with a yearning, brooding vision which gnawed at his heart-strings.

After a few weeks he found that he could think of them without that torment. He had perfected his imagination of them by an intensity of thought. They had become, as it were, a real country in his brain, through which his mind could walk at will, almost as he had walked in the reality. By mental effort, absorbing his now narrowed external life, he could imagine himself walking with Ottalie up the well-known waters and loanings, so poignantly, with such precision of imagined detail, that the country seen by him as he passed through it was as deeply felt as the real scene. The solemnity of his life made his imagination of Ottalie deeper and more precious. At times he felt her by him, as though an older, unearthly sister walked with him, half friend, half guide. At other times, when he was lucky, in the intense and splendid dreams which come to those of dwarfed lives, he saw her in vision. Such times were white times, which made whole days precious; but at all times he had clear, precise memories of her; and, better still, a truer knowledge of her, and, through that, a truer knowledge of life. He thought of her more than of his work. In thinking of her he was thankful that all his best work had been written in her praise. "His spirit was hers, the better part of him." If he had anything good in him, or which

strained towards good, she had put it there in the beauty of her passing. If he might find this cure, helping poor suffering man, it would be only a spark of her, smouldering to sudden burning in a heap of tow.

His efforts to make a culture succeeded. With very great difficulty he obtained a vigorous culture of trypanosomes, of the small kind usually obtained by culture. He strove to make the culture virulent, by growing it at the artificial equable temperature most favourable to the growth of the germ (25° C.), and by adding to the bouillon on which the germs fed minute quantities of those chemical qualities likely to strengthen them in one way or another.

It was a slow process, and Roger could ill spare time in his race with death. He had grown calmer and less impulsive since he had left the feverish, impulsive city; but he had not yet acquired the detachment from circumstance of the doctor or soldier. The question "Shall I be in time?" was always jarring upon the precept "You must not hurry." At last, one day when Lionel had shewn less responsiveness than usual, a temporary despondency made him give up hope. He saw no chance of having his anti-toxin ready before Lionel died. He picked up a book on serum therapy, and turned the pages idly. A heading caught his eye.

"*The treatment should begin soon after the disease has declared itself*" ran the heading. The paragraph went on to say that the anti-toxin was little likely to be of use after the toxin had taken a strong hold upon the patient's system. The treatment was more likely to be successful if a large

initial injection of the anti-toxin were given directly the disease became evident. There it was, in black and white; it was no use going on. He had tried all his ameliorative measures, with temporary success. Latterly he had tried them sparingly, fearing to immunize the germ. He had wanted to keep by him unused some strong drug which would hold off the disease at the end. Now there was nothing for it but to give the strong drug. His friend was dying. He might burn his ships and comb his hair for death. He had tried and failed.

The mood of depression had been ushered in by an attack of fever different from his other attacks. It did not pass off after following a regular course, like the recurrent malaria. It hung upon him in a constant, cutting headache, which took the strength out of him. He sat dully, weak as water, with a clanging head, repeating that Lionel was dying. Lionel was dying. One had only to think for a moment to see that it was hopeless. Lionel was going to die.

He raised his hand, thinking that something had bitten his throat. His throat glands were swollen. For a moment he thought that the swelling was only a mosquito bite; but a glance in the mirror shewed him that it was worse than that. The swollen glands were a sign that he, too, was sickening for death. His fever of the last few hours was the initial fever. Sooner or later he would drowse off to death as Lionel was drowsing. He might have only two more months of life. Two months. Ottalie had had two

startling, frightened seconds before death choked her. So this was what Ottalie had felt in those two seconds, fear, a blind longing of love for half a dozen, a thought of sky and freedom, a craving, an agony, and then the fear again. He rose up. "Even if it be all useless," he said to himself," I will fire off all my cartridges before I go." He brought out the Chamberland filter and set to work.

XII

Let 'em be happy, and rest so contented,
They pay the tribute of their hearts and knees.
Thiery and Theodoret.

AFTER passing some of his cultures through the filter, he injected subcutaneously the filtrate, composed of dead organisms and their toxins, into Lionel's arms and into his own. Taking one of the black-faced monkeys, which they had brought with them for the purpose, he shaved and cleansed a part of its neck, and injected a weak culture into the space prepared, after exposing the culture to a heat slightly below the heat necessary to kill the organisms. Into another monkey he injected a culture, weakened by a slight addition of carbolic. He had no great hope that the measure which he was preparing would be of use; he meant to try them all. "If I had had more time," he thought bitterly, "I might have succeeded." He had lost so much time in getting the culture to grow. As he sealed up the punctures with collodion, he said to himself that he had tried Lionel's cure, and that now he was free to try his own personal theories. He would kill some animal naturally immune, such as a wildebeest or a koodoo, and obtain serum from it direct, in as cleanly a manner as he could. Lionel had said that such a serum, so collected, would be useless

and probably septic; but who cared for possible blood-poisoning when the alternative was certain death? Personally he would prefer a death by glanders to this drowsy dying. If he could disable an antelope, he might be able to obtain the blood by formal antiseptic methods in sterilized pots. It would be worth trying. He had taken serum from a horse in England. He knew the process. Unfortunately the heart of Africa is not like England, nor is a kicking, horned, wild beast, tearing the earth to tatters in the death-agony, like a staid and glossy horse neatly arranged to be tapped. "Besides," he thought, "the beast may be suffering from all manner of diseases, or it may hold germs in toleration which the blood of man could not tolerate. And how was he to go hunting with an equipment of sterile pots and pipes on his back?"

He liked the notion too well to be frightened by the difficulties. It offered the possibility of success; it gave him hope, and it kept his mind busily engaged. Even if he saw no wild game, the hunt would be a change to him. He was a moderately good rifle-shot. The foil was the only weapon at which he was really clever. As he looked to his rifle, he felt contempt for the unreality of his life in London. It had been a life presupposing an immense external artificiality. How little a thing upset it! How helpless he was when it had been upset! And what would happen to England when something upset London, and scattered its constituent poisons broadcast? He went out to the hunt.

The wind blew steadily from the direction of the forest. There was no chance of doing anything from that side. He could never approach game down-wind. He would have to cross the river. He had never tried to cross the river. He did not even know if it were possible. The thought of the crocodiles and the mere sight of the swirling flood had kept him from examining the river. He had not been near it since he had sought with Lionel for the atoxyl bottles. What it looked like up-stream he did not know. He went upstream to look for a ford.

At a little distance beyond the hill he came upon something which made him pause. The earth there had been torn into tracks by the waters of a recent thunderstorm. The cleanness of the cuttings reminded Roger of the little bog-bursts which he had seen in Ireland after excessive rains. In one of the tracks the rushing water had swept bare the paving of an ancient road, leaving it clear to the sky for about twenty yards. The road was of a hard even surface, like the flooring of the Zimbabwe. To the touch the surface was that of a very good cycling road in the best condition. The ruts of carts were faintly marked upon it in dents. The road seemed to have been made of hewn stones, covered over and bound with the powdered pounded granite used for the floors of the ruins. It was five of Roger's paces in breadth. The edges were channelled with gutters. Beyond the gutters were borders of small hewn blocks neatly arranged, so that the growths near the road might not spread over it. Judging by the

direction of the uncovered part, the road entered the Zimbabwe through a gate in the west wall. In the other direction, away from the Zimbabwe, it led slantingly towards the river, keeping to the top of a ridge (possibly artificial), so as to avoid a low-lying tract still boggy from the flood. The river made a sharp bend at the point where the road impinged upon it. Below the bend the lie of the bank had an odd look, which recalled human endeavour even now, after the lapse of so many centuries. Greatly excited, Roger hurried up to look at the place.

It had been the port of the Zimbabwe. The bank had been cut away, so as to form a kind of dock. The stumps of the piles were still in the mud in places. They were strong, well-burnt wooden piles, such as are used for jetties everywhere. By the feel of the ground on the jetty top there was paved-work not far below it. A dig or two with a knife blade shewed that this was the case. The bank was paved like the road. Looking back towards the ruin, Roger could mark the track of the road running up to the wall. Even where it was overgrown he could tell its whereabouts by the comparative lightness of the colour of the grass upon it. Beyond the ruin, running almost straight to the south-east, he noticed a similar ribbon of light grass, marking another road. So this was a port, this Zimbabwe, a port at the terminus of a road. The road might lead direct to Ophir, whence Solomon obtained his ivory and apes and peacocks. Probably there were gold mines near at hand. This place, so

quiet now, had once seen a gold-rush. The wharf there had been thronged by jostlers hurrying to the fields. The basin of ill-smelling red mud had once been full of ships. And what ships? What people? And when? "A brachycephalic people of clever gold-workers of unknown antiquity."

Just above the "port" the river was extremely narrow. Sticking out of the water in the narrow part were masses of masonry, which may at one time have served as the piers of a bridge. They were so close together that Roger crossed the river by them without difficulty. On the other side, as he had expected, the mark of the road was ruled in a dim line in the direction of the forest. The country was rougher on that side. The line of the road was marked less plainly.

Late that afternoon, after an exhausting stalk, he got two shots at what he took to be a koodoo[1] cow. He went forward out of heart, believing that both had missed. Bright blood on the grass shewed him that he had hit her. A little further on he found the cow down, with her hindquarters paralysed. She struggled to get up to face him, poor brute; but she was too hard hit; she was dying. When she had struggled a little, he was able to close with her, avoiding the great horns. He was even able to prepare the throat in some measure for the operation. Lastly, avoiding a final struggle, he contrived to sterilize his hands with a solution from one of the pots slung about him. The sight of his hands even after this made him despair of getting an uncontaminated serum. But there

[1] It was probably an oryx.

was no help for it. He took out the knife, made the incision in the throat, and inserted the sterilized tube.

When he turned with his booty to go home, he noticed a little fawn which stood on a knoll above him, looking at him. She stood quite still, so shaded off against the grasses that only a lucky eye could distinguish her. She was waiting, perhaps, for him to go away, so that she might call her mother. She made no effort to run from him. Something in her appearance made him think that she was ill. The carriage of her head seemed queer. Her coat had a look of staring. He wished, then, that he had brought his glasses, so that he might examine her narrowly. Moving round a little, he made sure that her coat was in poor condition. He judged that she might have been mauled by a beast of prey.

He was just about to move on when a thought occurred to him. What if the young of the wild game should not be immune? What if the bite of the infected tsetse should set up a mild form of nagana in them from which they recover? What if that mild sickness should confer a subsequent immunity on the inflicted individual? Surely the result would be obvious. "Vaccination" with the blood of the afflicted calf or fawn would set up a mild attack of the disease in man, and, perhaps, give him subsequent immunity from more virulent infection. The ailments of wild animals are few. What if this fawn should be suffering from a mild attack of the disease? He crept a little nearer to her, bending low down to

see if he could see the swellings on the legs and belly which mark the disease in quadrupeds. He could not be sure of them. He could only be sure that the coat was staring, and that the nose and eyes were watery. He whistled gently to the little creature, hoping that she would be too young to be frightened of him. She stared at him with wide eyes, trembling slightly, flexing her ears. He whistled to her again. She called plaintively to her dam. She lowered her little head, ready to attack, pawing the ground like a warrior. Roger fired. Afterwards he felt as though he had killed a girl.

He returned to "Portobe" weighted down with jars, which he emptied carefully into sterilized pans. The result made "Portobe" look like a cannibal's dairy. An examination of the blood shewed that both animals had harboured trypanosomes in large numbers. When the blood had coagulated, he decanted the serum into sterilized bottles, to which he added minute quantities of antiseptic. That operation gave him his serum. He had now to test it for bacteria and for toxins. He added a portion from each bottle to various culture-mediums in test-tubes. He added these test portions to all his media, to glycerine-agar and glucose as well as to those better suited to the growth of trypanosomes.

He set them aside to incubate.

If there were bacteria in the sera they would increase and multiply on the delightful food of the media. When Roger came to examine the media, he came expecting to find them swarming with

bacteria of all known kinds. He was naturally vain of the success of his hunting; but he knew that crude surgery out in the open is not so wholesome a method of obtaining serum as might be. Still, a close examination shewed him that the cultures had not developed bacteria. He was pleased at this; but his pleasure was dashed by the thought that it was rather too good to be true. He might have muddled the experiment by adding too much disinfectant to the sera while bottling, by using cultures which had in some way lost their attractiveness, or by some failure in the preparation of the slides. After going through his examination a second time, he decided to proceed. He injected large doses of the sera into two monkeys.

Again he was successful. The monkeys shewed no symptoms of poisoning. The sera, whatever they might be, were evidently harmless to the "homologous" animal. But the success made Roger even more doubtful of himself. It made him actually anxious, lest in adding disinfectant to the sera, he should have destroyed the protective forces in them, as well as the micro-organisms at which he had aimed. He delayed no longer. He injected Lionel with a large dose of the serum from the grown animal; he injected himself with the serum from the fawn. Going down to the village, he made a minute examination of those who were the least ill. Choosing out those who shewed no outward signs of the congenital or acquired forms of blood-poisoning, he injected them with sera, thinking that if they recovered he

would use their sera for other cases. For his own part, he felt better already. The excitement of hope was on him. He had risen above his body.

For the next few days his life was a fever of hope, broken with hours of despair. One of his patients died suddenly the day after the injection. Lionel seemed no better. Another patient seemed markedly worse. He repeated the doses, and passed a miserable morning watching Lionel. The evening temperature shewed a marked decrease. An examination of the throat glands shewed that the trypanosomes had become less waggish. They were bunching into clumps, "agglutinizing," with slow, irregular movements. That seemed to him to be the first hopeful sign. On studying his books he could not be sure that it really was a good sign. One book seemed to say that agglutination made the germs more virulent; another that it paralysed them. He could see for himself that they had ceased to multiply by splitting longitudinally. And from that he argued that their vitality had been weakened.

The next day Lionel was better; but the native patients were all worse. They were alarmingly worse. They shewed symptoms which were not in the books. They swelled slightly, as though the skin had been inflated. The flesh seemed bladdery and inelastic at the same time. The pigment of the skin became paler; the patients became an ashy grey colour. The blood of one of these sufferers killed a guinea-pig in three hours. After a short period of evident suffering they died, one after

the other, apparently of the exhaustion following on high fever. Roger, in a dreadful state of mental anguish, stayed with them till they were dead, trying remedy after remedy. He felt that he had killed them all. He felt that their blood was on his hands. He felt that all those people might still have been alive had he not tried his wretched nostrum on them. There was no doubt that the sera had caused their deaths. Those who had had no serum injections were no worse than they had been. He wondered how long it would be before these symptoms of swelling and high fever appeared in himself and Lionel. He went back to "Portobe" expecting to find Lionel in high fever, going the road to Marumba.

He found Lionel weakly walking about outside the tent, conscious, but not yet able to talk intelligibly. He had not expected to see Lionel walk again. The sight made him forget the deaths down in the village. He shouted with joy. Closer examination made him less joyous. The skin of Lionel's arm, very dull and inelastic to the touch, was slightly swollen with something of the bladdery look which he had noticed in the men now dead. It was as though the body had been encased in a bladdery substance slightly inflated. He had no heart to test the symptoms upon the body of another animal. There was death enough about without that. He sat down over the microscope and examined his sera again and again. He could find no trace of any living micro-organisms. The sera seemed to be sterile. But he saw now that it had some evil effect upon those infected with trypano-

somes. He could not guess the exact chemical nature of the effect. It probably affected the constituents of the blood in some way. The poison in the sera seemed to need the presence of trypanosomes to complete its virulence.

While he worked over the microscope, he noticed that his own flesh was developing the symptom. He put aside his work when he saw that. He concluded that Lionel and he were marked for death within twenty-four hours. Before death (as he had learned in the village) they might look to suffer much pain. After some hours of suffering they would become unconscious and delirious. After raving for a while they would die there in the lonely hut, and presently the ants would march in in regular ranks to give them cleanly burial. Their bones would lie on the cots till some thunderstorm swept them under mud. Nobody would ever hear of them. They would be forgotten. People in England would wonder what had become of them; they would wonder less as time went on, and at last they would cease to wonder. Newspapers would allude to him from time to time in paragraphs two lines long. Then, as his contemporaries grew older, that would stop, too. He would be forgotten, utterly, and nobody would know, and nobody would care.

It was dreadful to him to think that nobody would know. He could count on an hour or two of freedom from pain. Before the pain shut out the world from him, he would try to leave some record of what they were. He sat down to write a death-letter. It was useless, of course, and yet it

might, perhaps, by a rare chance, some day, come to the knowledge of those whom he had known in England. He wondered who would find the letter, if it were ever found. Some great German scientist about to banish the disease. Some drunken English gold prospector with a cockney accent. Some missionary, or sportsman, or commercial traveller. More likely it would be some roving savage with a snuff-box in his earlobe, and a stone of copper wire about his limbs. He wrote out a short letter :

" Lionel Uppingham Huntley Heseltine, Roger Monkhouse Naldrett. Dying here of blood poisoning, following the use of koodoo serum for trypanosomiasis. Should this come to the hands of a European, he is requested to communicate with Dr. Heseltine, 47A Harley Square, Wimpole Street, W., London, England, and with the British Consul at Shirikanga, C.F.S."

He added a few words more ; but afterwards erased them. He had given the essentials. There was no need to say more. He translated the brief message into French, Spanish, and German, and signed the copies. He placed the document in a tin soap box which he chained to an iron rod driven into the floor of the hut. When that was done, he felt that he had taken his farewell to life.

He thought of Ottalie, without hope of any kind. He was daunted by the thought of her. He could not feel that his soul would ever reach to her soul, across all those wilds. He was heavy with the grow-

ing of the change upon him. This death of which he had thought so grandly seemed very stupid now that he was coming to know it. He remembered reproving a young poet for the remark that death could not possibly be so stupid as life. It was monstrous to suppose that the young poet could be right after all. And yet——

He went out hurriedly and released all the laboratory animals: guinea-pigs, monkeys, and white rats. They should not die of starvation, poor beasts. They squeaked and gibbered excitedly for a minute or two, as they moved off to explore. Probably the snakes had them all within the week.

After some hours of waiting for the agony to begin, Roger fell asleep, and slept till the next morning. When he woke he sat up and looked about him, being not quite sure at first that he was still alive. His pulse was normal, his tongue was normal, his heart was normal. He felt particularly well. He looked at his flesh. The bladdery look had relapsed, the skin was normal again. Looking over to Lionel's cot, he saw that Lionel was not in the hut. Fearing that he had wandered out to die in a fit of delirium, he went out into the open to look for him.

It was a bright, windy, tropic morning, with a tonic briskness in the air such as one feels sometimes in England, in April and late September. One of the released monkeys was fast by the neck again upon his perch. He was munching a biscuit with his entire vitality. Lionel sat upon the wall, sunning himself in a blanket. His attitude sug-

gested both great physical weakness, and entire self-confidence.

"I say, Roger," he began. "It's too bad. You are a juggins! You've let all our menagerie go. What are we to do for laboratory animals? I caught McGinty here. Otherwise we'd have been without a single one. Every cage in the place is wide open. What have you been doing?"

"My God!" said Roger. "He's cured!"

"Cured, sir?" said Lionel. "Why shouldn't I be? There's been nothing wrong with me except fever. But I'm not joking. I want to know about these animals. What were you thinking of to let them out?"

"Lionel," said Roger, "for the last five weeks you've been dying of sleeping sickness. The atoxyl was lost. I believe you threw it away."

"There's the atoxyl," said Lionel, pointing. "In the hole in the wall there. I put it there yesterday, after dosing those two."

Sure enough, there stood the bottle in the dimness of a hole in the wall. Roger must have passed it some fifty times.

"I looked for it everywhere," said Roger.

Lionel's eyes narrowed to the sharpness of medical scrutiny. He examined Roger for some time.

"Let me take your pulse, Lionel," said Roger, staring back.

"My pulse is all right," said Lionel. "Be off and look for guinea-pigs." The pulse was all right; so was the flesh of the wrist.

"I suppose the next thing you'll want me to believe is that I've still got sleeping sickness? Well,

look at my tongue. Perhaps that will convince you." Lionel waited for an answer for a moment with protruding tongue. The tongue was steady. Lionel returned to the charge. "What have you been playing at with those Weissner serum pans?" he asked. "Have you been bleeding the monkeys? You seem to have been having a field-day generally."

"I tell you," said Roger, "that you've been dying of sleeping sickness for five weeks. Look at your temperature chart. Look at my diary. After the atoxyl was lost, I tried every mortal thing we had. And nothing was any good. You were drowsing away to death for days. Don't you remember?"

"I remember having fever, and you or somebody messing around with a needle. But, five weeks, man! Five weeks. Come!"

"I tell you, you have. You've been unconscious half the time."

"Well. If I've had sleeping sickness, how comes it that I'm here, talking to you? You say yourself the atoxyl was lost."

"Lionel," said Roger, "I injected you with a dead culture. After that, I shot a couple of koodoos (if they were koodoos), a cow and a fawn. The fawn had nagana or something. I took sera from them, and injected the sera into both of us. Great big doses in both cases. I injected the sera into seven poor devils in the village, and they all swelled up and died. It was awful, Lionel. What makes people swell up?"

"I don't know," said Lionel. "I suppose it might be anthrax. Was there fever?"

"Intense pain, very high fever, and death apparently from exhaustion. And you and I swelled up a little; and I made sure yesterday that we were both going to die too. I wrote letters, and stuck them up on a bar inside there."

"Oh, so that was what the rod was for? I thought it was something funny. And now we are both cured?"

"Yes. My God, Lionel, I'm thankful to hear your voice again. You don't know what it's been."

They shook hands.

"You're a public benefactor," said Lionel. He looked hard at Roger. "I give you best," he added. "I thought you were a griff. But you've found a cure, it seems. Eh? Look at him. It's the first time he's realized it!"

"But," Roger stammered, "I've killed seven with it; that's not what I call a cure."

"Did you inject the seven with the dead culture first?" Lionel asked.

"No. Only myself and you."

"There you are," said Lionel. "You griffs make the discoveries, and haven't got the gumption to see them. My good Lord! It's as plain as measles. You inject the dead culture. That's the first step. That makes the trypanosomes agglutinize. Very well, then. You inject your serum when they are agglutinized; not before. When they are agglutinized, the serum destroys them, after raising queer symptoms. When they are not agglutinized the serum destroys you by the excess

of what causes the queer symptoms. I don't understand those symptoms. They are so entirely unexpected. Did you examine the blood ? "

"One cubic centimetre of the venous blood killed a guinea-pig in three hours."

"Yes, no doubt. But did you look at the blood microscopically ? "

"No," said Roger, ashamed. "I looked at my sera for streptococci."

"You juggins ! " said Lionel. "Yet you come out and land on a cure. Well, well ! You're a lucky dog. Let's go in and look at our glands." Roger noticed that he walked with the totter of one newly risen from a violent attack of fever.

Four months later, the two men reached Shirikanga in a canoe of their own making. They were paddled by four survivors from the village. All the rest were dead, either of sleeping sickness or of the serum. Lionel had not discovered what it was in the serum which caused the fatal symptoms. It contained some quality which caused the streptococci, or pus-forming microbes, to increase; but, as far as he could discover, this quality was exerted only when the patient's blood contained virulent trypanosomes, or some other active toxin-producing micro-organisms in the unagglutinized condition. They cured four of the villagers. They might have saved more had they been able to begin the treatment earlier in the disease. They were not dissatisfied with their success. They "had powler't up and down a bit," like the Jovial Huntsmen. They had come to some knowledge

of each other, and to some extension of their faculties.

Scientifically, they had done less than they had hoped; but more than they had expected to do. They had been the first to cure cases with animal serum. They had been the first to study in any way the effect of nagana upon the young of wild game, and to prepare (as yet untested) vaccine from young antelopes, quaggas, and elands. They had discovered a wash of Paris green and lime which destroyed the tsetse pupæ. They had cleared some three miles of fly belt. They had studied the tsetse. They had surveyed the whole and excavated a part of the Zimbabwe. Lastly, they had settled the foundations of friendship between them.

That was, perhaps, the best result of the expedition. They had settled a friendship likely to last through life. They were confident that they would do great things together. Shirikanga hove in sight at the river mouth. Two country barques lay at anchor there, with grimy awnings over their poops. Ashore, in the blaze of the day, were a few white-washed huts, from one of which a Union Jack floated. In the compound of another hut a negro was slowly hoisting the ball of a flag. He brought it to the truck and broke it out, so that it fluttered free. It was a red burgee, the letter B of the code.

"Mail day," said Lionel. "We shall be out of here to-night. We shall be at Banana by Wednesday. That means Antwerp by Wednesday three weeks. London's not far away."

"Good," said Roger. He was not thinking of London. He was thinking of a lonely Irish hill, where there were many yellow-hammers. The trees there stood up like ghosts. Round an old, grey, two-storied house the bees murmured. He was thinking that perhaps one or two roses might be in blossom about the house even a month later, when he would stand there.

He thought of his life in Africa, and of its bearing upon himself. It had done him good. He was worth more to the world than he had been a year before. He thought little of his success. It had been fortunate. It had saved Lionel. When he thought of his earlier life he sighed. He knew that he would have achieved more than that sorry triumph had he been trained. His life had been improvised, never organized. Great things are done only when the improvising mind has a great organization behind it.

He thought it all over again when he lay in his bunk in a cabin of the *Kabinda*, on his way up-coast. He was at peace with the world. Clean sheets, the European faces, and the civilized meals in the saloon, had wiped out the memory of the past. Africa was already very dim to him. The Zimbabwe rose up in his mind like something seen in a dream, a dim, but rather grand shape. The miseries of the camp were dim. He had been sad that morning in bidding farewell to the four whose lives he had saved. Jellybags, Toro, Buckshot, and Pocahontas. He repeated their names and considered their engaging traits. Jellybags was the best of them. He had liked Jellybags. Jellybags

had wanted to come with them. He would never see Jellybags again. He didn't care particularly. The sheets of the bunk were very comfortable. At the end of a great adventure things are seen in false proportions. Only the thought that those men had shared his life for a while gave him the suggestion of a qualm before he put them from his mind.

He thought of Ottalie. He saw her more clearly than of old. In the old days he had seen her through the pink mists of amatory sentiment. The sentiment was gone. Action had knocked it out of him. He saw her now as she was. She was more wonderful in the clearer light; more wonderful than ever; a fine, trained, scrupulous mind, drilled to a beautiful unerring choice in life. She was near and real to him, so real that he seemed to be within her mind, following its fearlessness. He felt that he understood her now. With a rush of emotion he felt that he could bring what she had been into the life of his time.

In the steamer at Banana was a German scientist bound to Sierra Leone. He spoke English. He asked the two friends about their achievement. Lionel told him that they had discovered a serum for the cure of trypanosomiasis. The German smiled. "Ah," he said. "There is already sera. The Japanese bacteriologist, what was his name? Shima? Oshima? Shiga? No, Hiroshiga, He have found a good serum, which makes der peoples die sometimes. Then there is Mühlbauer who have improved the serum of Hiroshiga. He have added a little trypanroth or a little mercury or somedings.

Now he have cured everymans. I wonder you have not seen of Hiroshiga in der newspapers. He have make his experiments in der spring; and Mühlbauer he is now at Nairobi curing everymans. He have vaccination camps."

"Well," said Lionel. "We've been beaten on the post. You hear, Roger? All that we have done has been done."

"You wait," said Roger. "We're only beginning."

Afterwards he was sad that it was ending thus. He would have been proud to have given a cure to the world. It would have been an offering to Ottalie. She would have loved to share that honour. He had plucked that poor little flower for her at the risk of his life. It was hard to find that it was only a paper flower after all. He thought of Ottalie as standing at the window of the upper passage looking out for him. She seemed to him to be something of all cleanness and fearlessness, waiting for him to lead her into the world, so that men might serve her.

In Ottalie's old home, a month later, he saw his way. Leslie, Lionel, and himself sat together in the twilight, talking of her. Roger was deeply moved by a sense of her presence there. He leaned forward to them and spoke earnestly, asking them to join hands in building some memorial to her. "She was like a new spirit coming to the world," he said. "Like the new spirit. We ought to bring that new spirit into the world. Let us form a brotherhood of three to do that. We are three untrained enthusiasts. Let us prepare an organiza-

tion for the enthusiasts who come after us. Let us build up an interest in the new hygiene and the new science; in all that is cleanly and fearless. We could start a little school and laboratory together, and run a monthly paper preaching our tenets. All the ills of modern life come from dirt and sentiment, and the cowardice which both imply. If we stand together and attack those ills, year in and year out, we shall get rid of them. Little by little, if one stands at a street corner, the crowd gathers."

"Yes," said Leslie. "And you think dirt and sentiment the bad things? Well, perhaps you're right. They're both due to a want of order in the mind. What do you think, Lionel?"

"I?" said Lionel. "I say, certainly. We three are living in a most wonderful time. The world is just coming to see that science is not a substitute for religion, but religion of a very deep and austere kind. We are seeing only the beginning of it."

They settled a plan of action together.

Roger went out into the garden, and down the hill, thinking of the crusade against the weariness and filth of cities. There was an after-glow upon the hills. It fell with a ruddy glare on the window of his dream. It thrilled him. The light would fall there long after the house had fallen. It had lighted Ottalie. It had burned upon the pane when Ottalie's mother stood there. Nature was enduring; Nature the imperfect; Nature the enemy, which blighted the rose and spread the weed. Thinking of the woman who had waited for him there in his vision, he prayed that her

influence in him might help to bring to earth that promised life, in which man, curbing Nature to his use, would assert a new law and rule like a king, where now, even in his strength, he walks sentenced, a prey to all things baser.

THE END

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